



COMMITTEE TITLE: Clean & Green Committee

DATE: 26th February 2024

REPORT TITLE:	Allotments
REPORT OF:	Marcus Hotten, Director of Environment
REPORT FOR:	Information only
WARDS:	All

REPORT SUMMARY

The Clean & Green Committee in September 2023 agreed that Officers in consultation with the Horticultural society identify new sites and seek to undertake a review of the existing allotments site to determine capacity and unmet demand.

The society believe that should any additional resource be made available to invest into the allotments, priority should be given to investing in existing sites seeking to maximise their potential, recognising the burden the additional administrative resource would represent for the Society should the further new sites be created.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund identified potential funding for Allotment maintenance. It is anticipated that the CIL report will be presented to Members at Council by September 2024. There is, therefore, and opportunity for the members to consider the allotments requirements in the debate and decision-making process of that Council meeting.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The Clean & Green Committee in September 2023 agreed that Officers in consultation with the Horticultural society identify new sites and seek to undertake a review of the existing allotments site to determine capacity and unmet demand.

1.2 PLC Consultancy undertook a Sports, Leisure and Open Space Assessment Final Report – August 2016.

The report stated that there are 15 allotment sites in the Borough providing approximately 770 plots of various sizes in a total of 12.57 hectares. A

standard allotment plot has an area of 250 square metres (originally ten square poles or 302.5 square yards) which equates to 40 plots to the hectare. There are, therefore, the equivalent of 503 standard plots in total. The figure of 770 arises from factors including popular sites where standard plots have been sub-divided to help reduce waiting lists or where site boundaries and shape make exact division impractical.

- 1.3 A list of sites, based on the information in the 2016 report, with their sizes and number of plots is set out in paragraph 2.3 below.

Site Name	Ha	Nos of plots	No of standard plots
Bishops Hall Road	0.19	15	8
Crescent Road	1.38	50	55
Hartwood	3.28	210	131
Middle Road	0.69	30	28
Ongar Road	0.87	56	35
Park Road	2.15	200	86
Stock Lane	1.83	93	73
Wash Road	0.20	15	8
Birbeck Road	0.08	6	3
Fielding Way	0.18	15	7
Honeypot Lane	0.47	25	19
Rectory Lane	0.22	10	9
River Road	0.50	20	20
Roman Road	0.34	15	14
Salmonds Grove	0.18	10	8
	12.56	770	504

Update on position

- 1.4 Of the 15 allotment sites, 8 are managed on behalf of the Council by the Brentwood Horticultural Society, representing the majority (over 600) plots available.
- 1.5 In communication with the Brentwood Horticultural Society it was explained to Officers, that at the time of the consultancy report in 2016, the society had an informal management structure, with many plots not let or cultivated, with intervention required on the sites to get them back to full use.
- 1.6 The Society have expressed concern over the accuracy of the above table (Paragraph 1.3), in particular the size of the sites, with site area being

overrepresented and consideration not being given to area lost to infrastructure, shape of the site, or easements

- 1.7 From 2017, until December 2023, there has been a total of 760 applications for allotment plots. The society has installed a total of 330 new plot holders across the 8 sites under its responsibility.
- 1.8 The Society is manned by unpaid volunteers and, although through previous employments, have suitable skills to manage the administration and management of the society's membership, it was emphasised that the staffing resources required to manage the allotments is as important as the availability of additional allotments. Indeed, if additional allotments were to be made available, it is the additional resource to manage the administration of any new allotments that would potentially limit any further expansion. The society has stated that it does not have the voluntary resource to support any additional sites.
- 1.9 The waiting list for an allotment remains fairly consistent, at an approximate 100 applications, this drops at the end of the society's administrative year (End of October) as existing plot holders relinquish their plots, with the waiting list increasing over the year, as new enquiries are made throughout the year.
- 1.10 The length of the waiting list varies especially for those sites that are relatively small but have a significant local need for plots. In this case there is a justification to expand the sites that are already established.
- 1.11 The society have previously recovered unusable land at the Ongar Road site for additional plots, by installing French drains, perimeter fencing and clearing the area of many years' worth of detritus all at the Society's expense. The Society commended the close working relationship with the Council's Asset Team who have assisted on seeking to develop and improve existing sites.
- 1.12 In summary, the society believe that should any additional resource be made available to invest into the allotments, priority should be given to investing in existing sites seeking to maximise their potential, recognising the burden the additional administrative resource would represent for the Society should the further new sites be created.
- 1.13 Therefore it is concluded that at this time further new allotment sites should not be brought forward until further support can be provide to the horticultural societies.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 1.14 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was approved at Full Council in September 2024. The CIL fund identified, within the adopted Infrastructure Delivery Plan Part B, potential funding for allotment maintenance. This has been estimated at £1 million over the plan period of up to 2033. This is of course dependent on how much CIL income the Council receives, and consideration being given to the competing priorities of other items of

infrastructure that have been brought forward. In terms of priority the funding of the allotments was ranked the lowest at a '3'.

- 1.15 The decision on what the CIL money is spent on will be determined by Council, with Members having the opportunity to consider potential CIL funding for allotments, however a justification would have to be brought forward.
- 1.16 It is anticipated that the above CIL report will be presented to Members at Council by September 2024. There is, therefore, an opportunity for the members to give consideration to the allotments requirements in the debate and decision-making process of that Council meeting.

2.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 2.1 None, the report is currently, effectively setting out the position of the Society.

3.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 3.1 None has been undertaken.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

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5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

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6.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct economic implications arising from this report.

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7.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act make discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and 'civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic.

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8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None