



**Telford and Wrekin  
Allotments Strategy  
2009 – 2014**



***Halcrow***





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# 1. Aim and Purpose of the Telford and Wrekin Council Allotments Strategy

## 1.1 Aim

*“To improve the quality, management and promotion of **all** allotment sites to offer access to this unique leisure activity to **all** members of the community”.*

## 1.2 Purpose

The Allotments Strategy will review Telford and Wrekin Council’s allotment provision with the intention of providing a well-managed service offering high quality allotments throughout the Borough, in the most cost effective manner over the next 5 years, whilst also taking note of factors which could impact on allotments beyond this period.

Integral to this review will be:

1. To ensure that the strategic aims of this strategy compliment and support the overall aims of the Council and link to national initiatives; and
2. To consider the most effective way of providing an allotment service for gardeners in our community through the following measures:
  - How the allotments are managed and administered;
  - How the allotments are funded;
  - To ensure that there is an adequate stock of allotments to meet the present and future needs of our communities; and
  - To ensure the benefits of allotment gardening are promoted to all sections of the community.



## 2. Introduction

Allotments have been an important and valuable part of our urban and rural communities for over 150 years. They were created to empower those on low incomes to improve their quality of life, health and diet, by growing their own food. The common land these people worked was the remains of land that had once been communal agricultural land.

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 made the provision of allotments for the 'labouring poor' mandatory and introduced the concept of landlord and tenant for allotment land. The 1908 Allotments Act made allotments the responsibility of local authorities and the 1922 Allotments Act made allotments available to all, not simply those on low incomes.

The use of allotments peaked during World War II as people responded to Britain's 'Dig for Victory' demand for self-sufficiency, with one and a half million plots being cultivated. During this period 1,300,000 tonnes of food per annum was grown on 1,400,000 plots, which was nearly 1 tonne of food per plot. Post war Britain saw a fall in allotment use due to changes in society with 'cheap' food and the negative stereotyping of allotment gardening as the leisure pursuit of those on low incomes, or the white, retired male.

Allotment law was last updated under The Allotments Act 1950, but there remains the need for alteration in the law to reflect changes in allotment gardening. In modern allotment gardening people of all ages and backgrounds are creating vibrant communities that produce fresh, healthy food and offer a healthy lifestyle too. In 1998 the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions published a White Paper on the Future of Allotments. 'A Good Practice Guide' from the Local Government Association has followed this. Both documents highlight the contribution that allotments make to an improved quality of life.

During the past 10 years gardening has become a very popular leisure activity in the UK because it offers a relaxing alternative to the stressful pace of modern day life. Increasingly allotments are being valued for their therapeutic benefits in providing a quiet refuge, where people can have the sense of gardening in the country, within an urban environment.

The Local Government Association however, estimates that 200,000 allotments have been lost in the last 30 years, totalling over eleven square miles, an area 15 times the size of Hyde Park.

Despite these losses, there has been a recent surge in demand for allotments, with an estimated 13,000 people on waiting lists in the UK. Another reason for this demand for allotments is increasing concerns over the safety and quality of our food. Food scares and the poor vitamin and mineral quality of food grown in depleted, intensively farmed soils, have led to an increasing awareness of the value of home grown produce, free of chemicals. This desire for 'home grown food' and concern over environmental damage from 'air miles' is leading many people to turn to allotment gardening as a means of producing healthy, fresh, locally produced food that is often organically grown.

This concern over our diet is acknowledged at government level with increasing concern over obesity in the population. Public health campaigns are consistently highlighting the necessity of a diet high in fruit and vegetables, along with adequate exercise.

*"Nearly two thirds of men and over half of women in England are now overweight or obese. And the problem here is increasing faster than in most other European countries. If prevalence continues to rise at the current rate, more than one in four adults will be obese by 2010. This would significantly increase the incidence of associated diseases, such as coronary heart disease, and would cost the economy over £3.5 billion a year by that date."*

Sir John Bourne Head of the National Audit Office - 'Tackling Obesity in England'  
15th February 2004.

Despite increasing affluence in Britain the original need for allotments as a means of improving the quality of life for those on low incomes remains. Studies have revealed that under-nutrition still remains a problem in the UK.

*“One of the major causes is poverty. It is estimated that nearly 14 million people in the UK live in households with incomes below the European poverty line of half the average income. Diets in low income households are characterised by less dietary variety and poorer nutrient profiles. Dietary surveys of British adults have reported lower intakes of many vitamins and minerals, particularly vitamin C, beta-carotene, vitamin E and iron in those who are unemployed, receiving benefits or in the two lowest social classes. Similar results have been reported for young children and schoolchildren; those from manual social classes or less-advantaged homes had lower vitamin and mineral intakes. Low income is also associated with lack of knowledge and skills related to food, nutrition and cooking.”*

British Nutrition Foundation ‘Undernutrition in the UK’ 2003.

In March 2008, Cllr Paul Bettison, Chairman of the Local Government Association’s Environment Board, said:

*“The last few years has seen a real upsurge in the number of people who want to get an allotment. A whole generation of twenty somethings and young families are rolling up their sleeves and picking up a trowel.*

*Having an allotment is no longer about flat caps and thermos flasks. Nowadays allotments are the preserve of Jamie Oliver just as much as Arthur Fowler.*

*In particular inner cities have been poorly equipped for the increase in interest and waiting lists have begun to spiral because of a shortage of plots.*

*Urgent action must be taken to meet this growing demand and ensuring developers include space for allotments in new building projects would make a real difference. Green spaces are the lungs of big cities and places where people can relax and get away from the hustle and bustle.*

*There are a whole range of benefits of allotments, from getting out in the fresh air and getting some exercise to growing you own organic food and saving on the shopping bills. At a time when childhood obesity is on the up, organic products are becoming ever more popular and the price of food is rising, getting an allotment makes perfect sense for people to get down to their allotments.”*

So although the demand for allotments has varied during the twentieth century, the twenty-first century is seeing the beginnings of a strong allotment revival as people turn to allotments as a means of enhancing their health; physically, mentally and emotionally. The most recent development in the history of the allotment movement has been the formation of the Allotment Regeneration Initiative (ARI), which recognises the value of allotments and is supporting the demand for healthy, sustainable allotments throughout the country. In 1998 a select Committee of the Department for the Environment, Transport & Regional Affairs published a report called “The Future for Allotments” supporting the practice of devolving a share of the responsibility for managing allotment sites to local allotment societies/associations (known as devolved management). Telford and Wrekin Council has been proactive on this initiative and has so far entered into 2 agreements with allotment associations.

### 3. Background Information and Strategic Context

As part of the process of developing this Allotments Strategy, it is important to relate to the Council's overall corporate community aspirations and overarching policies as well as emphasise any national context that is relevant to allotments. This is important as it adds value to the Strategy, ensures national and corporate aims are linked to service delivery plans and ensures that funding is targeted to the relevant areas whilst desired outputs and results are achieved.

#### 3.1 National, Regional and Local Strategic Context – Policy Review

##### **National**

- *Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, White Paper on the "Future of Allotments" 1998*

This report noted and acknowledged that allotments often form a component part of healthy neighbourhoods. Given the undisputed health benefits of allotments, they strongly recommended that allotment provision be explicitly noted in national public health strategies and be integrated into the local delivery of those strategies, particularly for the over 50s age group which traditionally dominates the profile of allotment holders.

It also recommended that health authorities should recognise and exploit the therapeutic potential of allotments for people with mental or physical health problems as well as recommending a need for urgent action to protect existing allotment sites.

The Committee's report commented on the shrinking demand for allotments. The Government believed that the loss of allotment land was due largely to a decrease in demand for allotments since their peak for food supply during the Second World War, and had no evidence for an expected increase in demand. It summarized that local demand for allotments was assessed in all cases where an application was made for the disposal of statutory allotment land. Most disposals of statutory allotment land occurred where there was a lack of demand for plots, and the 1997 English Allotments Survey found there to be over 33,000 vacant statutory plots in England.

The report noted that allotments formed an important part of leisure provision and that this should be reflected within a local authority's Leisure Strategy and Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

With regard to allotment land status, the Government did not favour giving long term temporary allotment land automatic statutory protection, as this could deter local authorities from putting land to temporary allotment use and would also require primary legislation. However they deemed to ask local authorities to consider whether, where allotments have been in use for many years and there are no plans for specific use such as for cemeteries, they would give the land statutory allotment status.

From March 1998, the Government placed an additional requirement on allotment authorities to demonstrate the active promotion of allotments before they can dispose of statutory allotment land. Where an authority attempts to dispose of statutory allotment land on the basis of lack of demand, information about the promotion of allotments is used to assess the inherent demand for allotments. They did not wish to be prescriptive about the provision of allotment officials or facilities as they considered that this is better decided at a local level.

The report believed that self-management fulfilled the twin aims of ensuring greater control of a site by allotment holders and also reducing a local authority's administrative responsibilities. They recommended that all local authorities examine the potential for self-management of their allotment sites.



The Government also recommended that the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions should draw up an appropriate model agreement that can be used by local authorities formally to devolve responsibilities to allotment societies. In particular, this should make provision for a local authority to take back control of a site in exceptional circumstances.

- *Local Government Association (LGA) - Growing in the community: a good practice guide for the management of allotments*

The LGA has revised this best-selling resource for allotment officers and associations to provide an update of the policy framework, legislation and practice affecting allotment gardening.

Allotments play a vital role in connecting people to the process of food production, enabling them to grow fresh, cheap food, whilst reducing food transportation miles. They provide valuable green spaces and wildlife habitats, support genetic diversity and preserve rare and unique varieties of vegetables. At the same time they offer opportunities for people to be active, meet others and share knowledge, information and food. Allotments can help councils and other organisations to achieve a range of important objectives, from health and wellbeing, through to biodiversity and community cohesion.

The Local Government Association in 2008 also recommended that large scale developments in urban areas should be forced to allocate land for allotments to combat spiralling waiting lists and a chronic shortage of plots for growing fruit and vegetables in some parts of the country.

However, the last few years has seen an upsurge in demand, with allotments proving particularly popular with environmentally-aware young professionals keen to grow their own organic food. This has led to waiting lists of up to 10 years in some parts of the country.

The Local Government Association, which represents over 400 councils in England and Wales, is encouraging councils to make the most of powers to compel developers to include areas of greenery within new large scale building projects, where a shortage of allotments is a local problem.

- *Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17)*

(Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002).

This revised guidance represents a considerable policy shift from the original 1991 version and is a huge step forward which relates strongly to the whole of the Government's 'liveability' and urban renaissance agendas.

The key changes include:

- Putting open space at the heart of the document (in the 1991 version, Sport and Recreation, open space was fairly peripheral, while many took the view that open space had been 'shoe-horned' into the March 2001 draft revision, almost on an opportunistic basis);
- Promotion of a clear typology of open spaces. Arguably the lack of a suitable typology has limited open space planning to date. The definition in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 - is poor ("*land laid out as a public garden or used for the purposes of recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground*") while the widespread adoption of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) Standard effectively means that many planning authorities use a hopelessly inadequate typology of children's and adult's 'playing space'. Many planning authorities have simply used the NPFA Standard without understanding it, or knowing that it dates back to the nineteen twenties;

- A clear statement that planning authorities should undertake local assessments and audits, with both qualitative and quantitative components, to set local standards and not continue to rely on national standards. Where an authority has not undertaken an assessment, developers wishing to redevelop an existing open space must (a) undertake an independent assessment to demonstrate that it is surplus to requirements and (b) have consulted the local community and obtained its support for the development proposals. The reason for this is that it would not be acceptable for an authority to refuse planning permission simply on the grounds that it had not undertaken a local assessment.
- A welcome emphasis on accessibility and quality and an end to reliance on purely quantitative standards such as the NPFA standard;
- Clear recognition of the importance of enhancing existing open spaces and facilities and clear guidance that planning obligations can be used to remedy both qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in provision;
- Recognition of the importance of linking the 'planning system' to the 'management system', with local assessments providing the starting point for open space strategies;
- A clear policy statement that before an open space can be redeveloped for some other purpose, it must be 'surplus to requirements' in terms of the full open space typology and not just its existing use;
- Making clear that planning authorities can require commercial and industrial developers to provide or contribute to open space or sport and recreation facilities; this opens up the possibility for example, of requiring office and retail developers to contribute to parks which might be used by their workers or shoppers. The problem with this is finding a defensible way of calculating the required contributions;
- Planning authorities are expected to enhance the rights of way network – hitherto this has usually been seen as primarily a highways matter; and
- A greater role for local communities.

### ***Regional and Local***

- *Local Development Framework (LDF)*

The Local Development Plan is unlike previous plans, in that it will provide a long term development plan/vision for the Borough through to 2021 as it is comprised of a collective set of documents:

- Local Development Scheme (LDS) effective from 3rd August 2007 sets out a programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents;
- Local Development Documents (LDDs);
- Development Plan Documents (DPDs are subject to external examination) core strategy (adopted 2007) is the overarching policy document that sets out the vision, objectives and strategy of the LDF and all other DPDs must conform with the strategy set out in the core strategy;
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD);
- Statement of Community Involvement (SCI); and
- Sustainability Appraisals (SA).

The Council has recently carried out an open space audit which identifies the quality, value and accessibility of allotments within the Borough and highlights the importance of such facilities to local people. As stated above, Planning Policy Guidance 17 determines that local standards are derived from an open spaces audit based on quality, quantity, value and accessibility. The results from the recent Telford and Wrekin PPG17 audit are discussed on Page 15.

- *Telford & Wrekin Local Area Agreement 2005 – 2015*

The Local Area Agreement is supported by a mature partnership framework foundation to 'narrow the gap' in quality of life; deliver a sustainable community; meet local needs and empower communities; and transform Telford.

Local Area Agreements are useful in releasing funds to improve open spaces including allotments, especially when linked to issues such as improving the quality of life of local people.

- *Telford & Wrekin Council Equality & Diversity Scheme 2008 – 2011*

This report ensures that equality and diversity (including key equality elements: race; gender; disability; age; sexual orientation; religion or belief and human rights) is embedded in all services and employment practices and encouraged in the development of community cohesion to: improve quality of life; reduce inequalities; tackle discrimination; strengthen communities; and acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Allotments undoubtedly should be accessible to all, regardless of social background, race, gender or diversity. Allotments can contribute towards many existing and diverse groups within the Borough overall.

- *Telford & Wrekin Community Strategy 2006 – 2011*

The strategic partnership is comprised of a number of community based partnerships who are responsible for achieving the vision set out in the strategy. The strategy focuses on 6 community priorities established through community involvement:

1. **Transforming Telford & Wrekin:** Attract and secure investment whilst developing a good infrastructure to enable sustainable regeneration and development;
2. **Children & Young People:** Focusing on educational, social and health needs of all young people to transform children's achievements;
3. **Sustainable & Quality Environment:** Managing growing pressures through recycling, alternative transport, quality open space whilst enhancing and conserving the environment;
4. **Safe, Strong & Cohesive Community:** Strengthening communities through combating crime, encouraging diversity and equality;
5. **Healthier Communities & Vulnerable People:** Improving access to community services, reducing inequalities in health and improving peoples awareness focusing on a healthier life; and
6. **Local Economy & Skills:** Diversifying local economy through support of new and existing business whilst striving to develop local people's skills to propel this development.

This is an important document and any policy changes, development issues, funding applications must take into account these priorities. In terms of Allotments, Sustainable and Quality Environment, Children and Young People, Transforming Telford and Wrekin, Safe, Strong and Cohesive Community as well as Healthier Communities are all vitally important.



- *Heart & Soul – Telford & Wrekin Cultural Strategy 2003 – 2008*

This draft strategy provides a framework for the cultural development of Telford & Wrekin with the vision to *“building an all inclusive, prosperous and healthy community which offers a good quality of life for all the people of Telford & Wrekin”*. Open space, play, life long learning, fitness and the arts are all key elements linked into the strategy themes of Wellbeing; Social; Economic; Environmental and Financial and are essential to achieve and *“build a community that develops and maximises its potential through culture”*.

Allotments are important cultural and historical facilities and are highlighted as important to local people.

- *Telford & Wrekin Sport & Recreation Strategy*

The value of sport and recreation is acknowledged to be linked with tackling social exclusion, community safety, promoting health, learning opportunities and environmental enhancement. This strategy focuses on service provision; community participation in formulating strategic plans; rationalising of resources; and guidance for management, to inform proposals for development and identify and implement policies relevant to Sport and Recreation during the period of 2002 – 2011 providing context for development and change.

Telford & Wrekin Sport & Recreation acknowledges that Telford & Wrekin Partnerships Community Strategy sets out the context of this strategy (embracing 6 ambitions: Participation and Inclusion; Healthy Lifestyle; Facilities and Services; Quality and Sustainability; Personal Development; and Marketing) to reflect the community strategy vision.



## 4. Facts and Figures – The current position in Telford and Wrekin

As previously stated, there are 12 allotment sites within the Borough of Telford and Wrekin although only 3 are administered by Telford and Wrekin Council. They are Brookside, Randlay and Wellington. Two are run by Associations with the remaining by Parish / Town Councils.

Site	Managed/Details	Size and Status
Admaston Ringers Lane Admaston	Admaston Allotment Association	Size of Site – 10,848m <sup>2</sup> 2 year waiting list
Brookside Brookside Avenue Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	Waiting list 25 Plots in total Size of Site – 5,300 m <sup>2</sup>
Randlay Allotments Randlay Avenue Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	2 year waiting list, 70 on list Size of Site – 9,360m <sup>2</sup> 58 Plots in total
Wellington Wrekin View Road Wellington Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	Waiting list closed. 59 Plots in total Size of Site – 11,828 m <sup>2</sup>
Leegomery Allotments	Leegomery Allotment Association	Waiting List closed 70 Plots Size of Site – 11,345 m <sup>2</sup>
Madeley West View West View Road Madeley Telford	Madeley Parish Council	Waiting List 10 Plots Size of Site – 1,055 m <sup>2</sup>
Sutton Hill Bridgnorth Road Sutton Hill Telford	Madeley Parish Council	Waiting List 52 Plots Size of Site - 7,727 m <sup>2</sup>
Newport Meadow Road	Newport Town Council	25 Plots Size of Site – 3,297m <sup>2</sup>
Newport Boughey Road	Newport Town Council	15 Plots Size of Site – 13,987 m <sup>2</sup>
Stirchley – Only for residents of Stirchley Parish	Stirchley Parish Council	2 year waiting list 42 Plots Size of Site – 5,100 m <sup>2</sup>
Woodside Beech Road Woodside	The Gorge Parish Council and Woodside Allotment Association	Waiting list 100 Plots Size of Site – 20,476 m <sup>2</sup>
Trench Rd Allotments Trench Telford	Parish Council Centre Wrockwardine Wood	26 Plots Size of Site – 4,000 m <sup>2</sup>

Those directly managed by Telford and Wrekin Council are controlled by the Landscape and Recreation Team who's staff are responsible for all aspects of allotment management including:

- The administration and collection of fees and charges;
- Letting of vacant plots;
- Ensuring that the rules and regulations are adhered to;
- Resolution of disputes;
- Promotion of allotments;
- Ensuring that all allotment plots are cultivated and where they are not, operate a system for positively monitoring and re-letting them; and
- Ensuring that sites are maintained and repairs undertaken.

The fees and charges are reviewed every year by Telford and Wrekin Council. See Appendix 1 for the current fees and concessionary categories.

Those sites managed for Telford and Wrekin Council by the Allotments Associations have the same responsibilities as those listed above although there is currently no income received by the Council, derived from Allotment Associations.

Telford and Wrekin Council have encouraged the management of a number of allotments through individual associations over several years and this has been carried out when opportunities have arisen. The partnerships were formed as a way of improving the occupancy levels at the allotments and, by giving responsibility for the day to day operation of the sites to the Associations, it was considered that they would be better managed.

As part of the process for producing this strategy all of the Allotment Associations and Parish Councils were consulted to discuss how their organisations are structured, how they operate and how successful they feel they have been, and to seek their views on how improvements could be made. We have also consulted all allotment tenants on Council managed sites.

The results of this survey are summarised on pages 11-13.



## 5. Other Factors to be considered for the Future Provision of a High Quality Allotment Service in Telford and Wrekin

### 5.1 Consultation – What Allotment Holders Told Us

As part of the development of this Allotments Strategy, we have carried out considered consultation with:

- Telford and Wrekin Council Allotment Tenants;
- Town/Parish Council and Allotment Associations; and
- Town/Parish Councils with No Allotment Provision.

Despite the consultation carried out as part of the PPG17 Study, it was felt worthwhile to ascertain local views on specific allotment issues and this was carried out in June 2009, using a simple questionnaire format. The results are summarised below:

#### **Telford and Wrekin Allotment Tenants – response excellent (23%)**

**Length of tenure** - 11% have had allotments less than 1 year, 51% between 1 to 5 years, 14% between 6 to 10 years and 14% between 11 and 20 years;

**Main benefits of having an allotment** – most popular reasons are 1) growing own fresh produce (24%); 2) Enjoy gardening (18%); 3) contact with nature and fresh air (12%).

**Most new allotment holders would have preferred the plot being prepared before renting;**

56% of tenants have a half plot, with 44% a full plot;

36% of tenants chose their site as it was convenient to their home, 20% as it had a water supply, and 14% as it was the only site available.

66% of tenants rated their site excellent or good and 31% adequate;

97% said water supply and secure boundaries were essential;

Only 33% said toilets were essential, with 40% saying desirable;

47% felt car parking was essential, with 30% desirable;

65% felt maintenance of vacant plots was essential, with 35% desirable;

53% felt composting facilities were essential;

50% felt support from the Council was essential with 50% saying desirable.

83% felt response to vandalism was essential.

Most respondents commented on the issue related to untended plots not being cultivated and stronger policies required in having these plots re-let;

There was strong support for events and information, voluntary networks and green waste recycling facilities;

88% said there was a need for more allotments in their area;

86% visit their allotment 3 times or more a week during the growing season with 33% twice a week and 27% 3 times a week outside the growing season;

61% drive to their allotment, while 30% walk.

The average distance people travel is 1.4 miles taking no more than 10 minutes.

46% of tenants spend between 3 to 4 hours on their plots, with 34% between 1 and 2 hours; 56% spend only 1 to 2 hours in winter on their plots.

The main crops grown are root vegetables, green vegetables, peas and beans;

94% compost their own allotment waste while 60% practice organic gardening;

Most tend not to have help on their plots or enter competitions;

77% felt the maintenance of untended plots was unsatisfactory;

100% were happy with rents; Most tenants spend between £51 and £100 on materials

for their plot. Many tenants had contacted the Council over the last 12 months, with 85%

satisfied with the service provided. 94% of tenants are English, 72% male, 37% have a disability, with a growing number between 25-54 (50%) and 48% still employed.

## **Town/Parish Council and Allotment Associations – response excellent (67%)**

The following responses were received:

**Madeley Parish Council** – currently manage Sutton Hill and West View allotments. Both sites were rated good, Water supply is seen as essential as well as maintenance of vacant plots and common areas, council support and response to vandalism. Sutton Hill had a number of desirable elements, being the larger site, including car parking, toilets, plot markings and noticeboards. The Parish currently provides a number of events. The Parish feel there is a need for more allotments in their area. The average plot size at Sutton Hill is 115 m2. Both sites compost allotment waste and tenants practice organic gardening. Neither have competitions. Plots are not rotavated prior to letting. Cost at Sutton Hill is £25-00 p.a with concessions, with West View Terrace variable. The budget to maintain at Sutton Hill is £3220 per annum, with no budget at West View Terrace. Recent improvements at Sutton Hill include a portable toilet and open day event. Both sites have a waiting list dating back to 2008 (16 at Sutton Hill, 7 at West View). Sutton Hill is managed as an Association by the Parish Council. There are no surplus funds available. Both sites have a lease and are managed as part of the Finance and General Purposes Committee which meets 5 times a year. The main priorities at Sutton Hill are 1) security 2) Finance 3) Tenants. At West View, tenants are the main priority. Relationship with the Council is currently classed as average and they would like more help if available.

**Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Parish Council** – currently Stanmore Road/ Trench Road allotments. The site was rated excellent, with essential elements including water supply, secure boundaries, car parking, toilets, plot markings maintenance of vacant plots, composting, path network, response to vandalism and council support. They currently provide events, a network of users advice sharing as well as green waste recycling. With 29 plots already, they feel there is a need for more allotments in the area. Average plot size is 150 m2. The site practices composting as well as organic gardening as well as has site competitions. Price per plot is 10p per m2. There is no specific budget to maintain the site as expenses come from rents. The waiting list dates back to 2004 (35). They currently have an allotment committee with 6 members which meets 2-3 times a year. A lease exists. Relationship with the Council is very good.

**Newport Town Council** – currently maintain Boughey Road and Meadow View Road. Both sites are classed as good with essential features including water, boundary fencing, plot markings, noticeboards, maintenance of vacant plots, council support and response to vandalism. Events, shared advice and green waste recycling all provided. The Council has the view more allotments are needed. Meadow View plot size is 100m2, Boughey Road 30m2. Cost at meadow View is £30 per year (£25 for over 60's) and at Boughey Road £15 per year (£12-50 for over 60's). Boughey Road budget £445; Meadow View Road £920, with recent improvements to noticeboards. There is a waiting list of 86 dating back to 2006. The Council has a designated allotment officer. Neither sites currently have a lease. Main priorities are to improve access, security, maintenance and compliance with site rules.

**Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council** – currently maintain Stirchley site, rated excellent. Water supply, plot markings, path network, council support and response to vandalism all essential. They feel more allotments required in the area. Average plot size is 100 m2 costing between £10 and £31 per plot. Budget for maintaining the site is £500 per year. Recent improvements have been security fencing, raised beds and new footpaths investing £36,000. Waiting list consists of 11 people and is 3 months old. They have no allotments committee but meet twice a year to discuss allotments. A lease exists for the site. Priorities include safety improvements as well as the site meeting its full potential. Relationship with the Council is good.

### **Town/Parish Councils with No Allotment Provision – response excellent (45%)**

The following responses were received in response to:

- Q1.** Your Parish Council currently does not provide allotments anywhere in your Parish. Are there any other providers that you are aware of? If so, who and where?
- Q2.** Is the current lack of provision in your Parish an issue or has it been raised by your local community? Is there a perceived demand for allotments in your Parish?
- Q3.** Have you recently completed a Parish Plan? Do allotments feature within this at all?
- Q4.** If looking at potential sites across your Parish area, would you be able to suggest any areas where allotments could be provided?
- Q5.** Is the Parish Council interested in getting involved in developing a site and looking at the long term management of a site?
- Q6.** Have you anything further to add?

**Waters Upton Parish Council** - There are no allotments or allotment providers in the Parish. They have not been asked to consider the provision of allotments for many years. The Parish Strategy does not include anything on allotments but feel they have sites that would be suitable if the need was identified.

**Edgmond Parish Council** - No allotments are provided by the Parish Council although a private landowner lets a field to local residents for the use of allotments. The recently launched Parish Plan highlighted the need for allotments in Edgmond with over 40 people registering interest in having one. This is actively being developed and landowners are currently being contacted to seek their views, with management of any future site being administered by the Parish Council.

**Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council** - The Parish Council does not currently provide allotments as Telford and Wrekin Council provide a site on Randlay Avenue, which is fully allocated. A recent survey highlighted the need for additional plots. The Parish Council is keen to seek further sites and would also consider the management of the existing Randlay Avenue site managed by TWC.

**The Gorge Parish Council** - Their view was that if a Parish Council exists, they should be the allotments authority. The Parish Council is in the process of taking over the Woodside allotments site on a lease from TWC. There is a demand in the Parish which is being addressed. The Parish Plan does not mention allotments at all. Few sites are available within the parish but sites are being investigated.

**Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council** – The Parish has been actively seeking sites for the last 2 years and has struggled to find a suitable site belonging to TWC, Highway issues have been a hurdle. There is currently no Parish Plan. The Parish feel that TWC could be more helpful in finding suitable land. The Parish Council are very keen to develop sites and are more than willing to provide an allotment service for the parish but require more assistance from the TWC.

**Little Wenlock Parish Council** – The nearest site is Wellington, currently managed by TWC. The issue of allotments has been raised by a small number of residents who have shown an interest. If it became a reality, more people may become interested. It is currently unlikely that such a facility will be developed. They have a Parish Plan but allotments were not included. Many sites could be made available but would have to be at the discretion of farmers. The Parish would seek to develop this further if there was a demand. There is currently a gardening club in the Parish.



### Town/Parish Councils with No Allotment Provision continued...

**Oakengates Town Council** – There are no allotments or allotment providers in the Parish. Only one resident has raised the suggestion of having allotments as a good idea. Generally no one appears discontented by their absence. We do not have a Parish Plan. Due to the substantially built up parish I would suggest that it would be difficult to identify suitable allotment sites, though on detailed examination of the parish it may prove possible but the Council doesn't have any current intentions to develop a site.

**Rodington Parish Council** – There are no allotments or allotment providers in the Parish or any perceived demand for allotments within Rodington Parish Council. Whilst the Council does have a Parish Plan, allotments do not feature within it. Telford and Wrekin Council could provide details of where allotments may be provided and if demand arises then Rodington Parish would be interested in developing and managing a site though funding would be sought from Telford and Wrekin Council.

**Ketley Parish Council** - Ketley Parish Council does not provide allotments within the Parish and there are no other providers. The lack of provision is an issue as there is a demand for allotments. Currently we are in discussions with the principal authority, Telford & Wrekin Council regarding the use and management of all open spaces in the Parish. An outcome of this discussion may be the identification of a suitable location for such provision. Our Parish Plan will be drawn together in the Autumn and I am confident the need for allotments will feature in the plan.



## 6. Future Management and Future Demand? Local Authority, Allotment Association or Parish Council?

*“A lively allotment society can negotiate, liaise, work with, local councils, local firms, local sponsors of a variety of kinds and local voluntary groups, schools, social service departments, environmental food growing organisations, local civic trusts....., to develop events, to encourage people to visit the site for particular purposes, perhaps ecological work, and enabling youngsters to participate in repairing buildings, clearing areas and things like that, in ways that give people a responsibility, a responsiveness to the environment ... in a sense allotment holding has been sustainable for much longer than the word sustainability has existed and in a sense it offers a great example of good ways of using the environment.”*

Rio Summit of 1992.

National Government believes that self-management fulfils the twin aims of ensuring greater control of a site by allotment holders and also reducing a local authority's administrative responsibilities. The DETR report recommended that all local authorities examine the potential for self-management of their allotment sites.

It recommended the drawing up of an appropriate model agreement that can be used by local authorities formally to devolve responsibilities to allotment societies. In particular, it should make provision for a local authority to take back control of a site in exceptional circumstances.

In Telford, only 3 sites are controlled by Telford and Wrekin Council with the remainder by Allotment Associations and Parish Councils. Despite the general satisfaction with allotments in Telford, the Council see the benefits in developing Association managed sites and are keen to promote the benefits of Allotment Associations. However, if there is no specific desire for the 3 remaining sites to be managed by an Association, the Council will continue to manage each site accordingly. At the same time, there is a need to standardise the process in relation to roles and responsibilities across the Associations as they are all managed and let in different ways.

Allotments are primarily affected by two pieces of planning guidance, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3 (housing), which was revised in 2006, and Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17 (sport, open space and recreation), published in 2002, both of which incorporate recommendations from the 1998 parliamentary select committee inquiry into “The Future for Allotments”.

As we have discussed, PPG17 places an obligation on local authorities to undertake robust assessments of need for open spaces of different kinds, combined with audits of existing provision, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative attributes such as access. The audits and assessments of need then feed into the establishment of local standards for provision of open space, and the preparation of strategies that prioritise adjustments between different categories of open space, to ensure that local standards are met before surplus land is released for development.

PPG17 has in turn facilitated the preparation of green space strategies and importantly raised the profile of green space nationally, regionally and locally. This crucially has included allotments which are highlighted as a specific typology of open space within the PPG17 guidance.

Telford and Wrekin Council have recently carried out a robust assessment of all their open spaces which includes allotments. This was carried out in March 2008 and is discussed overleaf.

## **7. Current Allotment Provision & Condition of Sites in Telford and Wrekin – Based on the PPG17 Audit**

There are 12 allotment sites in Telford and Wrekin, of which the Council are responsible for 3 sites only.

In 2008 Telford and Wrekin commissioned consultants to carry out an open spaces needs assessment based on Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) principles. This is summarised below:

### **7.1 Provision: Quantity, Quality and Accessibility**

#### ***Quantity of Provision***

- 12 allotment sites in Telford & Wrekin – 7 have waiting lists (the highest demand is Admaston with a 2 year waiting list);
- 9 out of 12 sites are run or owned by a Parish Council or Allotment Association (highlighting the importance of ongoing partnerships between the Council and other providers in provision across the Borough); and
- The proposed Quantity Standard (derived from local needs consultation and an audit of provision): Existing level = 0.06ha per 1000 population. The report recommended a provision standard of 0.07ha per 1000 population.

#### **PPG17 Survey Results (Quantity)**

- 47% of respondents feel provision is currently insufficient;
- The highest level of dissatisfaction is in Newport: 53% felt provision was insufficient – 33% of allotments have no vacancies and waiting lists. However Newport has 2nd highest level of provision (0.08ha per 1000 pop);
- The highest level of satisfaction is in Telford South – 45% said quantity was about right (0.12 ha per 1000 pop); and
- Telford North East has the lowest level of provision (0.01ha per 1000 pop), with Telford South the highest level of provision.

#### **Consultation Results (Quantity)**

- There is an overall perception that the quantity of allotments is insufficient;
- This is supported by waiting lists across the whole Borough;
- A recommended standard should be set above the existing level of provision which means a requirement for an additional 76 allotment plots across Borough to help offset current and short term future demand. This standard would ensure that deficiencies in the quantity of allotments and access to allotments can be addressed across the Borough. Setting a standard at this level would equate to the requirement for an additional 76 allotment plots across the LDF period. This would go some way to offsetting the existing and future unmet demand.



### **Quality of Provision**

The allotments were assessed by site visits (although these are snapshots in time and may not be truly representative) and scores weighted according to findings of local consultation:

- Essential features: Toilets, security, good access (quality paths);
- Desirable attributes: Footpaths, clean/litter free, maintenance;
- The above elements were weighted higher to ensure a greater influence on overall quality score based on public opinion. i.e.
  - Security and Safety = 4
  - Ancillary Accommodation = 3
  - Cleanliness and Maintenance = 2
  - Vegetation = 1
- The quality perception of allotments across borough was:
  - 42% = Average Quality
  - 23% = Good Quality
  - 21% = Poor Quality
- Greatest dissatisfaction: Telford South (highest provision) where 47% say poor/very poor quality;
- Top quality site: Stirchley in Telford Central: 87% quality score; and
- No allotment scored less than 56% therefore overall scores display an average quality of allotments in Telford & Wrekin.

The report concluded that the Council should focus on **increasing provision** whilst also slightly **enhancing quality** of lower scoring sites.

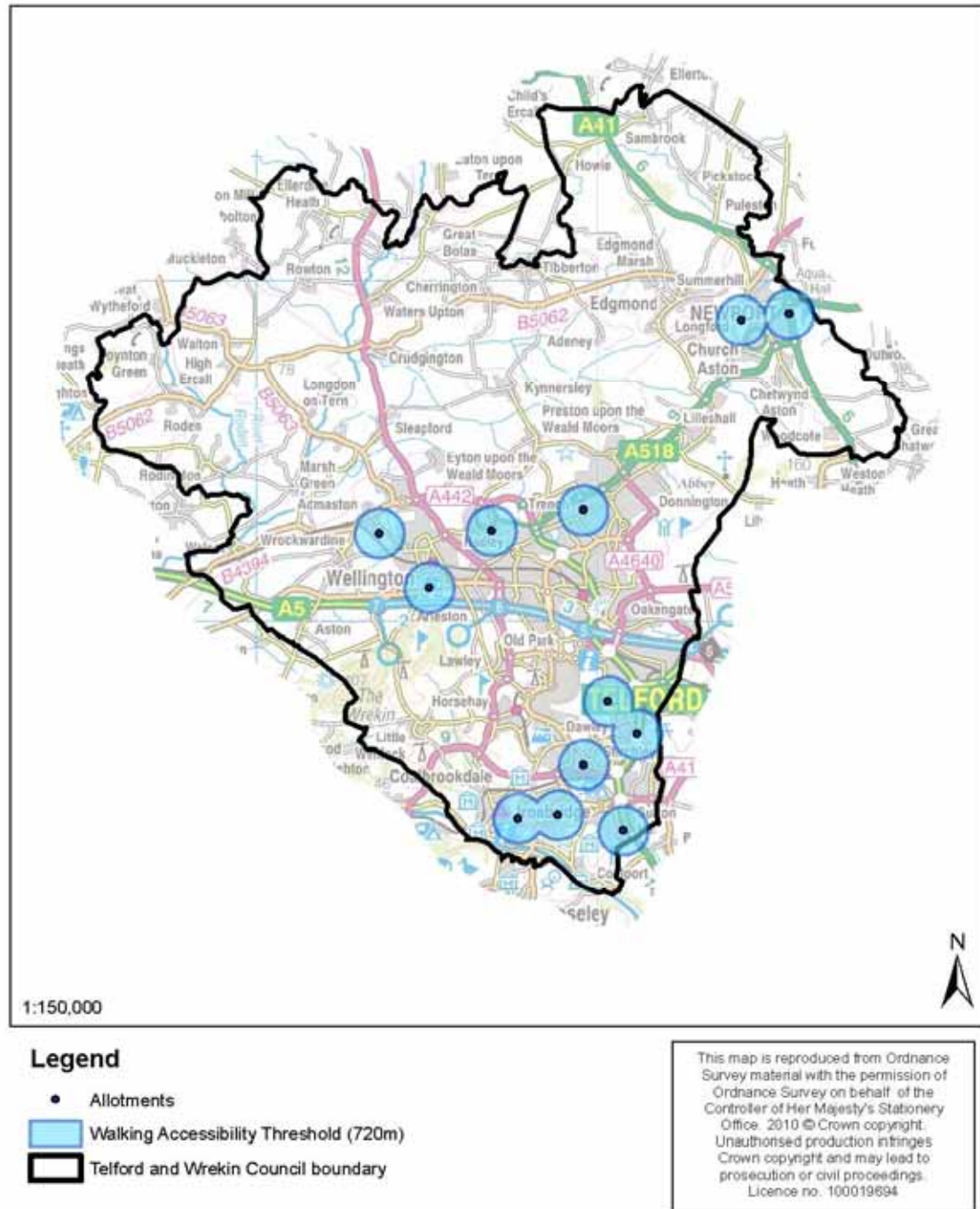
### **Accessibility**

- Accessibility is imperative to maximise usage and provide opportunities for use by all;
- Recommended local standard (in accordance with PPG17 Companion Guide): Distance threshold = 15min (720m) walk time to meet expectations of most users and potential users; and
- Site assessment shows the majority of sites good/average in terms of transport links and general access.

### **Consultation Results**

- Walking (53%) is the most popular way to travel to allotments (residents suggest allotments should be accessible on foot); and
- 36% stated by car.

### Provision of Allotments in Telford and Wrekin - 720m Walking Distance Threshold



## **Information and Signage**

- Potential issue, rated poor or very poor in site assessments.

## **Applying Provision Standards**

- The application of recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of allotments and to identify those geographical areas of importance and those areas where there is potentially unmet demand;
- There is a need to apply standards together to ascertain whether allotments meet minimum provision standards (quality) and where those deficiencies are of high importance (accessibility); and
- Due to demand-led nature of allotments, the application of quantity, quality, and accessibility standards should be a starting point only. Detailed research and monitoring should be undertaken prior to development of new allotments.

### ***Applying the Quantity Standard***

(<0.07ha per 1000 pop). By 2016, 5 out of 7 areas are expected to have quantitative deficiencies, (the exceptions are Telford South and Newport).

The overall deficiency borough wide = -2.15ha.

### ***Applying Accessibility Standards***

(Based on a 720m buffer). There is limited provision in the rural areas (however allotments are more important in urban areas where private space is limited).

Largest deficiencies: North of Telford Central, South of Telford North West, Telford North East.

## **Gaps in Provision (Supply and Demand) – Quantitative Deficiency**

- Largest in Telford North East. Applying the accessibility standard shows Muxton, Donnington (particularly important as small gardens), Shawbirch and Priorslee outside recommended distance threshold. By 2016, based on this standard, there is likely to be an estimated demand for a further 79 allotment plots within this area of the town;
- There is also a deficiency in Telford North West. Two sites (Wrekin Rd and Leegomery) are within the area but a large proportion is outside the distance threshold – Ketley, Oakengates, Apley Castle. The shortfalls equate to 39 plots. There is a long waiting list at Wrekin Road Allotments. Leegomery is of poorer quality and would benefit from investment;
- In Central Telford there is a deficiency of approx 14 plots. According to accessibility standards, new allotments should be in Lawley and Overdale/Horsehay and Lightmoor areas; and
- There are some deficiencies to the North of Newport and East and South of Telford South. 3 existing sites have waiting lists therefore further plots are likely to be required.

## **The PPG17 Report Summary**

### ***Existing Situation***

12 allotment sites, 10.6ha which equates to 0.06ha per 1000 pop.

All sites have waiting lists and demand is increasing.

## **Results of Consultation, Survey and Site Visits**

- Household survey: 47.3% consider allotment provision insufficient;
  - Expectation to be able to walk to an allotment;
  - Toilets, security, good access perceived as key for high quality allotments;
  - Ancillary accommodation and safety key areas where sites could be improved; and
  - Value of allotments to local residents for social opportunity, tranquillity and alternative option for exercise was emphasised.
- *Deficiencies*

A number of deficiencies are highlighted from the application of recommended standards, focusing to the North of Telford in particular.

### **The PPG 17 Report Suggests the Next Steps**

1. Shortfalls of allotments across Borough, good distribution of facilities, high levels of use at all sites. Therefore all provision should be protected from development;
2. A need for greater provision of allotments; and
3. Innovative approaches to solve the problem should be considered: e.g. links and partnerships with Schools.

The report and PPG17 study is an important piece of work which highlights the current requirement for allotments with demand far exceeding supply.

While the reference to allotments in this study and the PPG17 guidance is helpful, it should be noted that waiting lists should not be treated as the only indicator of unmet demand, as they only capture unmet demand that has been expressed. In some areas the closure of waiting lists as a response to heavy demand may lead to systematic underassessment of local need. Expressed demand will also be conditional on the extent to which allotments have been actively promoted to all sections of the community, and will remain latent if they are not. There is at present no generally accepted procedure for assessing the gap between current use levels and waiting lists and the potential additional need for allotments if actively promoted.

*“The need for allotments, community gardens and urban farms is likely to rise with the growth of interest in organic farming and as a result of rising housing densities and the consequential reduction in the size of many gardens. The number of allotments required in any area is a function of demand and therefore it will be appropriate to use a demand-led methodology, based on local authority records. It is obviously desirable for local authorities not only to provide and rent allotments, but also to keep a waiting list as this helps to identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. Accordingly there is likely to be a need for a population-based provision standard, coupled with an accessibility standard or distance threshold.”*

(From DLTR (now CLG): Assessing needs and opportunities: A companion guide to PPG17 (2002) annex – open space typology)



In April 2009, a further review was carried out in relation to the **quality** of existing sites in Telford and Wrekin which included all 12 sites. These are discussed below:

## Leegomery Allotments

- Association managed site
- Good car parking
- Water available with stand pipes
- Security average, with chain link fence
- Good overall access
- Swap shop and storage on site with garage
- Signage at entrance with contact details
- Notice boards on site
- Several uncultivated plots, but a waiting list!
- Very active site



## Trench Road Allotments

- Parish Council managed site
- Good car parking
- Community building with toilets
- Excellent security with palisade fence
- Fully cultivated
- Water available with standpipes
- Internal footpaths
- Good access
- No signage or notice-boards
- Storage
- Well overlooked by adjacent properties
- Very active site with community events



## Admaston, Ringers Lane Allotments

- Association managed site
- Reasonable provision for car parking
- Poor access down a country lane, not easy
- Overlooked by houses
- Fully cultivated
- Water with standpipes
- Signboard and notice-board
- Grass paths
- Clean and well maintained
- Good internal access
- Excellent boundaries, hedges and barrier to playing fields
- No toilets



## Wellington Allotments

- Council managed site
- Water available with standpipes
- Good security although the main gate is poor
- Internal footpaths are average
- Clean and well maintained
- Parking for approx 5 cars which is poor
- Signboard and notice-board
- No toilets
- Fully cultivated
- Overlooked by adjacent properties





## Madeley West View Allotments

- Parish Council managed site
- Good car parking
- Overlooked by houses
- Fully cultivated
- Water with standpipes
- Clean and well maintained
- Signage with ownership details
- Grass paths



## Brookside Allotments

- Council managed site
- Water supplies with standpipes
- Good security fencing
- Wildlife pond with shelter
- Signage and notice-board
- Grass paths
- External car parking
- Not fully cultivated although waiting lists



## Sutton Hill Allotments

- Parish Council Managed site
- No signage re ownership
- Chemical toilet facility
- Excellent security with palisade fence
- Paths hard surfaced
- Community recycling area
- No vacant plots
- Fully cultivated
- Watering points with standpipes
- Car parking outside
- Clean and well maintained site



## Woodside Allotments

- Parish Council and Association managed site
- Good notice-board
- 2 no. 'Porta-loos'
- Good parking
- Excellent vehicular access
- Community recycling area/raised beds
- Shop and community room/community garden/birdboxes
- Tool store
- Water standpipes
- Polytunnels
- Well maintained and managed and used by other allotment sites for obtaining produce and materials





## Stirchley Allotments

- Parish Council managed site
- Good signage with contact details
- Reasonable access
- Excellent secure palisade fence
- Water with standpipes
- On-site storage
- Fully utilised and cultivated
- Car parking is limited
- Paths throughout are in good condition



## Randlay Allotments

- Council Managed site
- Good signage with contact details
- New security palisade fence
- Footpaths and tracks in reasonable condition but could be improved
- Water available via standpipes but pressure is low.
- Trees need cutting back on boundary
- Separate composting areas
- No vacant plots but several are untidy and not cultivated
- Good noticeboard
- Car park for approximately 6 cars
- No toilets on site



## Bougey Lane Allotments, Newport

- Town Council managed site
- Reasonable car parking
- Very small site
- Fully cultivated
- Chain link fence in poor condition
- Signage
- Well overlooked by housing
- Water available
- Good access
- Tidy site and well maintained



## Meadow Road Allotments – Newport

- Managed and owned by the Town Council
- Good car parking and excellent access
- Fully cultivated
- Overlooked by housing
- Poultry allowed on site
- Watering points are an issue and requires improving and upgrading
- Small shelter on site
- Very active Association
- Tool storage
- Community composting and recycling
- Sales on site
- Noticeboard and signage very good





## 8. Other Planning Issues

The Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document sets out the long term strategic development framework for Telford and Wrekin. It has no specific policies related to allotments but does have the following policies which are relevant to allotment land:

### 8.1 Policy CS10 Community Facilities

The loss of existing land or buildings used for the benefit of the community will be resisted. Only where a lack of need is demonstrated or where acceptable alternative provision exists or is proposed concurrently, will development for non-community uses be considered.

The provision of new community facilities or improvements to existing community facilities to meet the needs of local residents will be supported.

### 8.2 Policy CS11 Open Space

Within the context of the development needs of the Borough, this policy seeks to protect and enhance areas of open space, both formal and informal.

Development on open space will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- There will be significant community and environmental benefits delivered by the proposal; and
- The land does not contribute to the open space standards set to meet the requirements of the local population.

As we have already noted, Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) gives guidelines to planning authorities on a range of issues relating to the provision of sports and recreational facilities and on informal open spaces. Within the Annex to PPG17 it requests that local planning authorities, when preparing development plans, 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.

Summary of key issues:

1. Considerable shortage of allotment sites across the Borough;
2. Demand is rising and waiting lists are long;
3. Quality is reasonably good and generally acceptable;
4. Investment in sites is ongoing and generally good;
5. Sites are well managed;
6. Clarification on roles and responsibilities with standardisation required between the Council and Allotment Associations; and
7. Lack of potential sites perceived across the Borough.

## 9. Promotion and Encouragement of Allotment Gardeners

The present information shows that all the allotment sites in Telford and Wrekin are very popular with high occupancy levels (many being at full capacity with waiting lists over 2 years). Although there is no detailed local data available it is apparent that although there are increasing numbers of women and younger people from wider social and economic backgrounds starting to take allotment plots there is still more work that could be done to encourage a wider profile of usage, particularly amongst schools, disabled groups, and to promote the health agenda. As well as physical problems such as obesity, heart disease and the need to take more exercise, there is also the opportunity for allotments to tackle psychological issues such as stress.

Ongoing and further promotion of allotments within the Borough, despite a current high demand are likely to encourage further provision being made available, whether through Developer Contributions, land release or capital allocations being made available to fulfil ongoing increased demand.

There are already a number of ongoing initiatives in the area related to allotments and growing food.

Telford and Wrekin PCT currently run a Community Food Project *“to give informed choices to the residents of Telford and Wrekin to help reduce health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing...”*

Although this initiative is not yet related directly to allotment gardening and growing your own food, there is future potential to link with this and other PCT initiatives in promoting and encouraging allotment gardening. The main initiative is however the “Green Gym”.

### 9.1 The Telford Green Gym Initiative - Overview

Telford Green Gym currently offers people an alternative way to improve their health and well-being by getting involved in practical horticulture, conservation and environmental activities around the Telford and Wrekin area. The Telford Green Gym allows people to do some physical activity whilst improving the countryside. A wide range of projects are run, such as:

#### **Allotments**

Organic fruit and vegetables are grown on four plots in Woodside Allotments.

#### **Practical Conservation**

Activities include woodland and wildlife management, pond maintenance, hedge-laying, building bridge stiles and walkways.

#### **Community**

Creating community gardens around the borough.

#### **Education Days**

Learning about the environment by doing surveys and monitoring projects.

#### **Benefits**

Taking part in Green Gym sessions aim to get local people physically fit, but it has also been shown to have a positive effect on emotional well-being as well. Many volunteers have gained in confidence as they have learnt new skills and some have gone on to jobs or do further training in the environmental field.

## 9.2 Healthy Schools Initiative

Healthy Schools Programme is 10 years old this year and is today more relevant and more central to our agenda than ever before, as it is about the long-term health of the country.

*"There are countless examples of creativity and innovation from schools in supporting the health and wellbeing of their pupils - and I have every confidence that Healthy Schools will continue to provide vital support to schools as we move forwards, building towards our ambition for the 21st Century School."*

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

Being healthy is not just about children and young people, but about the whole school community. It is not just what happens in the curriculum, but it is about the entire school day.

Many schools in Telford and Wrekin are working closely with school meals on the Healthy Eating theme. Children, parents and carers, governors and caterers are being involved in drawing up a whole school food policy that covers all aspects of food and drink at school.

Many schools have set up School Nutritional Action Groups (SNAGs) to look at food and drink across the school day. These groups include children, staff, governors, parents and school cooks.

Guidance is also being given to parents and carers on providing healthier packed lunches for children and a local primary school recently worked with parents and children to produce their own leaflet to promote healthier lunchboxes. School SNAGs are monitoring lunchboxes and have their own reward schemes in place.

School Councils have also been involved in improving the eating environment in schools. This has involved carrying out surveys and finding out the views of everyone in school including the school kitchen staff and lunchtime supervisors.

With the help of School Meals, dining rooms in schools across Telford are being enhanced through colourful displays promoting healthy eating, less queuing, well presented dining tables, availability of water and agreed dining room rules so that everyone can relax and enjoy the "eating experience!"

In many cases across the UK, examples of schools developing allotments within school grounds or taking on an allotment are commonplace. There is potential within Telford and Wrekin's schools to develop on site 'growing' through such a concept as "Watch 'em Grow". Many school grounds have space and areas where an allotment could be developed with such facilities as recycling, composting, polytunnels, organic gardening and general horticulture.

The garden and allotment competition also has a schools category.

Despite the high demand, there are however a number of reasons for people not wanting to rent allotment plots. Many do not enjoy gardening and would not rent a plot whatever was offered. For others there is a range of initiatives which could encourage new gardeners and which should be considered:

- For the Council/Parish Council or Association to arrange for an overgrown plot to be tidied prior to letting even if there was a recharge for providing this service. The problem with this is that many gardeners take the plot, find that it is too difficult and lose interest. The plot remains overgrown and another gardener is offered the plot. They also find it too difficult and the cycle continues;
- Larger plots to be resized if requested;
- Produce booklets to give advice and advise new gardeners e.g. How to Get a Garden, Clearing an Overgrown Plot, What to Grow, Basic Skills, Composting etc.;
- The production of a newsletter to share information between allotments and Associations;
- The development of the Council's existing allotment website. This could link to other complimentary sites e.g. Community Food Project, Green Gym, the Allotment Regeneration Initiative (ARI), the National Society of Allotment Gardeners (NSALG), sources of external funding;
- For existing gardeners to offer advice to new gardeners;
- To provide new gardeners with starter packs which could include advice sheets, a range of seeds and the offer of a mentor to help offer advice;
- A poster campaign to promote the benefit of allotments; and
- To sponsor an annual allotment competition.





## 10. Further Site Provision

The creation of new allotment sites nationally, in recent years, has been limited as well as locally in Telford. Funding for new sites is inadequate and would have to be provided by either capital grant allocations or possibly from Section 106 commuted sum payments from Local Developers. Several issues arise in the creation of new allotment sites:

- **Land Allocation** – Most sites historically are on sites allocated where other land uses are difficult and were historically linked to the ‘dig for victory’ campaign during World War II, e.g. next to railway lines, edge of settlements, ‘left over land’. Finding unallocated new land will always be difficult due to competition from other demands such as housing, transportation, commercial or other leisure interests as well as issues related to access, car parking and adjacent land uses.
- **Political Will** – Allotments traditionally are used by a relative minority of the population and do not attract as a result, high level political support; and
- **Section 106 Allocations** – Funding is far more likely to be used to improve other local leisure or recreational facilities such as sports pitches, children’s play or the local park. Allotments are less likely to attract such funding.

The Telford and Wrekin PPG17 report highlights areas of deficiency as the principal issue in relation to allotment sites in the Borough. There is a strong uptake and long waiting lists and the report highlights areas with particular deficiencies which are listed below:

- Muxton;
- Priorslee;
- Donnington;
- Shawburch;
- Ketley;
- Oakengates;
- Apley Castle;
- Lawley;
- Overdale/Horsehay; and
- Lightmoor.

The Council is currently actively looking at increasing allotment provision in the following locations:-

- **Donnington Recreation Ground**, with a land allocation of 3,715 sq m in the park to provide a site for local people in Donnington;
- **Dawley Bank**, with a land allocation of 3,243 sq m to provide a site for local people in Dawley;
- Extension of **Admaston** allotment site by 8,270 sq m;
- Further site provision has been identified at **Muxton**, increasing options near Newport.

These sites could potentially provide up to **48** no. allotment plots increasing provision in areas where there are currently deficiencies. Once completed and exact numbers ascertained for each site, the Council will review the level of demand within these areas to assess whether further provision is still required.

Although the PPG17 report does not suggest potential new sites, this Allotments Strategy will address this issue through a Key Theme or Action Plan.

Types of areas where new allotment provision could be developed include:

- Existing local amenity green space which is currently under-used and of little value to a local community;
- Existing playing fields which have perimeter areas which are currently under-used and form 'awkward' corners which are of no use to sports users;
- School playing fields that could be identified as having surplus space for community growing projects;
- Private landowners e.g. National Trust, Network Rail, Housing Associations who maybe able to allocate land to allotment provision; and
- Land allocated as part of a new residential development based on the new provision standard.

The Allotments Acts make provision both for local demand to be properly expressed and taken account of, and for land to be acquired for the purpose of providing allotments. If new allotments are to be proposed, it is prudent to bear in mind the potential for future conversion of use in specifying the location of such provision. For example the Dartford Local Plan in 2002 specified that new sites "*should normally be provided on the edges of local parks, open space or playing fields to provide informal public surveillance and flexibility in case demand should change in the future*". In Carlisle, allotments created behind Council housing blocks have proved extremely difficult to find alternative uses for due to access issues, anti-social behaviour problems as well as small size, as local demand reduced. However there are some excellent examples of new provision across the country.

### Case Study – New Allotments for Leominster

New allotments were officially opened in Leominster in 2006 by Monty Don. In the 1980's land previously set aside for allotments in the town had been sold off due to lack of demand. In recent years demand has grown again and the statutory six electors came forward to request that the town council provided them with allotments within walking distance of the centre of the town. The waiting list grew to over 50 interested residents in 2004. After a long and difficult search, the town council acquired 2.5 acres of grazing land on a 21 year lease. The site was prepared by a local contractor and a water connection established. A portaloo and six refillable water troughs were installed and the site was divided into plots – some full size (about 250 square metres) and some half size (about 120 square metres).

ARI Newsletter Winter 2006.

Locally determined need also needs to be considered as a number of Parish Councils have expressed a desire for allotments within their Parish boundaries, which were not highlighted as part of the PPG17 study. The Council will therefore work with Parish Councils to help, advise and identify sites that can be considered as suitable for allotment provision based on local demand.

## 11. Management Arrangements – Relationship with Tenants

We have already noted the good practice of managing the Council's allotment stock through Associations and how this practice has been recommended through national reports (see 'Future of Allotments' produced by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee 1998).

Surveys with members of the Allotment Associations, Parish Councils and tenants in Telford have confirmed these arrangements. However, there are ways that this relationship could be improved:

- Re-designation of post to include allotment duties;
- Improved communication through Landscape and Recreation;
- Management of uncultivated plots and policy relating to how these reduced;
- Assistance in relation to legal issues such as land ownership; and
- Sharing of advice, creation of an allotments forum.

## 12. Legal Framework – Telford Code of Practice and Management of Tenancies

Telford and Wrekin Council currently have a Code of Practice in relation to the administration of allotments, last amended in December 2004. It details the procedures involved regarding the administration of allotments for the sites we are responsible for. The Code of Practice is simple and succinct in relation to the processes related to:

- New tenants;
- Existing tenants;
- Termination of plots;
- General site and plot inspections;
- Incentives; and
- Charges.

However, consideration should be given to developing an Allotments Charter, which would describe objectives and activities. This could be developed as part of the proposed Allotments Forum/Partnership proposed on page 51.

An allotment is defined in the Allotments Act, 1922, as being

*“wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”*

This definition excludes “trade or business” and allows restrictions on the keeping of certain livestock. It does not preclude some limited commercial activity in the form of sale of surplus produce, nor does it preclude part of the allotment being used for relaxation and recreation along the lines of continental “leisure gardens”.

Telford and Wrekin are keen to ensure that plots are well kept and cultivated and have no immediate concerns with what is being grown on the plot provided it takes no longer than 12 months to mature. The use of part an allotment for “leisure “ activities is acceptable, provided this does not become a source of nuisance nor give cause for concern about returning the

plot to an adequate condition should the tenancy end. The inclusion of a clause in tenancy agreements for illegal activities will be included.

The existing tenancy agreement used by the Council is comprehensive and is in line with that advised by the Local Government Association. However, it will be re-assessed every 12 months to ensure any issues that have arisen are suitably covered within the tenancy agreement pro forma.

The following should be included in any tenancy agreement:-

- **Rent, including water charges and rental of sheds or other structures;**
- **Collection of rent, including proportionate rent for part of the year and date when rent becomes due;**
- **Rent arrears;**
- **Prevention of nuisance or annoyance;**
- **Prohibition of the use of barbed wire;**
- **Prohibition of sub-letting;**
- **Determination of tenancy and notices to quit;**
- **Compensation;**
- **Observance of conditions of lease (if the land is leased by the council from a third party);**
- **Prohibition of trade or business;**
- **Erection of sheds, greenhouses and other structures;**
- **Keeping of livestock including bees;**
- Pruning of trees, removal of timber, soil, sand or gravel (or other specified material);
- Level of cultivation and cleanliness;
- Maintenance of sheds, greenhouses and other structures;
- Planting of trees, shrubs or of plants likely to be detrimental to the site;
- Upkeep of paths or boundaries between plots;
- Management of wastes, including limitations on bringing waste materials on site;
- Control of dogs;
- Display of plot number;
- Use of water;
- Use or storage of chemicals;
- Drainage;
- Conditions relating to the cultivation of other allotments;
- Restrictions or specifications on allowable distance between allotment site and home dwelling;
- Maintenance of hedges, ditches, paths and boundaries.



Conditions above in **bold type** are items which are specifically covered by legislation and therefore must be included in the agreement.

### 13. External Funding

In most cases rent will be the only income derived from an allotment site and expenditures will be manifold. These include not only site maintenance and repair but also administrative costs and promotion. They cannot be sustained without adequate finance. Levels of rent generally are low and need to be affordable by the local community. In some cases ploholders may be willing to pay for better facilities and promotion. Where raising rents is not a viable option, encouraging ploholders to accept devolved management arrangements would be appropriate to help reduce costs.

The following factors are taken into account when setting allotment rents:

- Long term financial sustainability;
- The nature, quality and cost of facilities provided (and desired);
- Expenditure on promotion and administration;
- The present level of rent and its historic tradition; and
- The likely effect of rent levels on plot take-up.

Rent concessions are permitted by allotment law and are granted by Telford and Wrekin to retired and unemployed tenants. Levels of rent across Telford and Wrekin range from £10.00 to £38.00.

There are various other sources of external funding, although what is available now may not be available in a few months time. Within Appendix 4 are details of contacts that are currently available or can offer advice. In particular there have been a number of recent initiatives by the Big Lottery Fund in relation to health promotion and healthy eating. Allotments have benefitted from such recent funding initiatives.

Specific and wide-ranging advice on fundraising for allotments is available in the ARI information pack '*A Guide to Fundraising for Allotment Associations*', which is available as a free download from the ARI website at [www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari). The pack also includes advice on reducing the need for money through recycling, the use of volunteer labour, and ways of generating additional income such as sales of produce, trading huts, events and social enterprises.

For additional advice on both national and local sources of grant funding, as well as training and practical support in completing applications, the local office of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) should be first port of call.

Past experience suggests locally and nationally that the most successful associations have accessed funding and support in kind from a variety of sources, on the principle that small amounts of money or goods can soon add up to a sum that can transform a site. This approach seems to work better than large, one-off applications to highly competitive funding schemes, where allotment associations can be at a disadvantage compared to general environmental, health or education projects that can easily prove a wider circle of beneficiaries. This has been especially successful at sites such as Trench Road and Woodside.

What would help the further development of allotments in Telford and Wrekin is for information and good practice to be shared between the Council, Allotment Associations and Parish Councils. There is also a considerable variation between Associations and Parishes in relation to what is invested into each site, ranging from nothing to £36,000!

## 14. Best Practice – The Model Allotment

Whilst at one time allotment gardeners were content with a plot of land to cultivate and very little else, many allotment providers have realised that provision of good facilities will help to ensure that the demand for allotments will continue to grow, and become more inclusive. However, this may vary from site to site. Car parking maybe suitable for a large site with a large number of plot holders from a larger area but the opposite may be the case where a site is easily accessible, serves a small village and is very small. Consultation highlighted the most important issues for allotment holders, Associations and Parish Councils as:

- Water supply;
- Secure boundary fencing;
- Car parking;
- Maintenance of vacant plots, response to vandalism;
- Path network; and
- Council support.

The following are discussed and we propose below what **all** allotments should aim for within Telford and Wrekin whether Parish Local Authority or Association.

### 14.1 Site Hut and Clubhouse

Allotment gardening as we know is a sociable activity and the provision of a communal space can add value to most sites as a meeting place for ploholders, for the bulk storage of materials and as a centre for distribution of equipment and seeds. Such a focal point is desirable for the long-term prosperity of a site and for the future popularity of allotments in general.

Several sites in Telford have developed a site hut and clubhouse and run these very successfully with some smaller sites developing meeting points by designing shelters where ploholders meet or simply take shelter from inclement weather. Some Associations are also actively campaigning in raising funds for shelters and site huts.

### 14.2 Lavatory Facilities

Many ploholders spend a great deal of time on their allotments and so provision of lavatory facilities will be welcome. This is particularly true where ploholders or user groups with disabilities have no accessible alternative, and on larger sites where the numbers of users more than justifies a standard provision comparable to that established for other leisure activities. The cost of connecting a lavatory to main drainage is considerable, but there are alternatives including chemical toilets and composting toilets – the latter being preferable from an environmental point of view.

Several Associations in Telford already have toilet facilities including Sutton Hill, Woodside and Trench Road. Use of portaloos is also quite common with some ploholders having their 'own' facility within their own shed.

However, careful consideration needs to be given to cleaning and maintenance arrangements and handwashing facilities. If not kept in proper order, these facilities may become a liability rather than an asset. The ARI has published an authoritative fact sheet, '*Accessible Toilets for Allotments*', which includes case studies and contact details for major suppliers including compost toilets.

### **14.3 Access**

Access to allotment sites should be safe, secure, and not in itself a barrier against any group of users, such as people with disabilities (as required by the Disability Discrimination Act). Every effort will be made to encourage and promote walking and cycling as appropriate means for local people to reach allotment sites, and the provision of secure cycle parking facilities near the entrances to allotments is also appropriate.

However although plotholders do often live near to sites, with the considerable demand for sites, some do often have to travel by car as it is too far to walk. The provision of adequate car parking helps prevent nuisance or danger from on road parking or damage to verges or vacant plots if cars are parked there. This may simply be a hard standing area of compacted Type 1 sub base or preferably tarmac.

### **14.4 Water Supply**

Access to a reliable supply of water is essential for all allotments. There is no minimum standard of provision required of allotment authorities; however some sites do have problems with water pressure, location of standpipes and many rely on draining rainfall from shed roofs into water butts, which should be encouraged.

The aim should be for all allotment providers to ensure access to mains tap water supply for every plotholder, with one outlet shared between no more than 6-8 plots. Outlets should be situated in a convenient location, bearing in mind the difficulties many may have in transporting water any distance.

Abuse of the water system needs to be regulated such as use of sprinklers and hosepipes and use should be clearly stated in the allotment rules. Information covering water supply issues is available from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

### **14.5 Sheds, Greenhouses and Polytunnels**

Without doubt, sheds are an absolute necessity for plotholders, usually for storage as well as shelter. Constructed by plotholders often using recycled materials, some degree of sympathetic regulation may be necessary to prevent the site from becoming too untidy or presenting a safety hazard.

Erection of sheds or other small buildings on allotments by a local authority will usually benefit from permitted development rights under Part 12 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, in which case local authorities would not need to apply for planning permission from them.

Greenhouses and polytunnels are treated in the same way although conditions may be imposed to ensure they do not become dilapidated or affect neighbouring plots.

### **14.6 Paths**

The Council and Associations should ensure that main footpaths on allotment sites are kept clear for access. This should especially include paths that are adjacent to uncultivated or over grown plots so that they can quickly be returned to cultivation when required.

Minor paths should lie with plotholders themselves and should be stated within the allotment rules or tenancy agreement.

### **14.7 Fences and Hedges**

Good fences or hedges around allotment site boundaries are important to ensure reasonable ongoing security and where appropriate will increase benefits to biodiversity, so should be well maintained.

## 15. Recommended Standards for Allotment Sites in Telford and Wrekin

The following is based on best practice currently available:-

1. The standard plot will be 250 sq m. Based on the following size of areas (80% plot: 20% ancillary features), the number of allotment plots that could be allocated including infrastructure are:-
  - 10,000 sq m - 32 plots
  - 15,000 sq m - 48 plots
  - 20,000 sq m - 64 plots

Each site should make allowance for half size plots to encourage those new to allotments and those with limited time. The number of smaller plots on Allotment Association sites is to be agreed annually at the AGM of the Association. For Council managed sites, the demand for smaller plots is to be monitored and adjusted annually;
2. Each site should have sufficient water taps to provide 1 tap per 8 plots given the existing water pressure. Each site should develop a strategy to rotate the use of taps in order to maximise pressure. It is recognised that a lower ratio is desirable, but steps will need to be taken to increase the water pressure but this is financially difficult at present, although some Associations are investigating funding to improve water pressure at the moment; and
3. In the interests of water conservation and to alleviate some of the problems with water pressure/lack of taps, each site should develop a water capture policy, encouraging all potholders' with a shed or greenhouse to install water butts to capture rain water. It should be a condition for any new structures permitted on allotment sites to include such a system.

## 16. Proposed Improvements to Existing Sites

Telford and Wrekin Council have carried out a number of improvements to their sites over the last 5 years. These are summarised below:

### 16.1 Randlay

#### Key Improvements over Last 5 Years

- Cleared half of site;
- Secured with new fencing and gates;
- Lifted trees/shrubs from outside of perimeter fence as requested by the Police;
- New notice boards;
- Numbering of plots;
- Barked pathways; and
- Cleared car park area.



### **Key Comments and Complaints with Potential Areas for Development**

- Plots not being cultivated or worked so a more rigorous policy to be incorporated;
- New pathways needed and should be added; and
- Toilets are required so should be introduced.

## **16.2 Wellington**

### **Key Improvements over Last 5 Years**

- New fencing erected;
- Cleared car park area to enlarge it and built retaining wall with sleepers;
- Removed tenants and re-let continuous un-worked plots; and
- Notice board added.

### **Key Comments and Complaints with Potential Areas for Development**

- Main roadway and pathway needs building up so should be improved;
- Toilets are required so are to be introduced;
- Car park to be fenced at the side and area to be covered with tarmac; and
- Allotment sign to be relocated to allow better access to car park.

## **16.3 Brookside**

### **Key Improvements over Last 5 Years**

- Fencing;
- Plot numbers;
- Notice board installed;
- Extra tap added;
- Fenced around pond; and
- Vacancies filled.

### **Key Comments and Complaints with Potential Areas for Development**

- Issues with Conifers require them to be cut back;
- Un-worked plots require introduction of more rigorous policy;
- New fence required to left hand side of site to be built.

## 17. Key Themes and Action Plan

### 17.1 Key Theme 1

To ensure sufficient stock of allotments at the recommended quantity standard, and to meet the present and future needs of Telford and Wrekin's community.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
1	To regularly monitor the level of occupancy and the level of cultivation at <b>all</b> allotment sites in Telford and Wrekin and ensure vacant plots are re-let within 4 weeks.	TWC AA PC	S, M, L
2	To increase allotment provision to reflect the longer term minimum shortfall in supply across Telford and Wrekin as well as look at increased provision of "half" plots, in particular:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donnington, Dawley, Muxton, Shawburch and Priorslee – 79 allotment plots</li> <li>• Ketley, Oakengates, Apley Castle – 39 allotment plots</li> <li>• Lawley, Overdale / Horsehay, Lightmoor – 14 allotment plots</li> <li>• North of Newport – a small deficiency only.</li> </ul>	TWC	M, L
3	To work with Landowners, Parish Councils, Schools and Allotment Associations in identifying sites for future provision.	TWC AA PC	M, L
4	To agree the allotment provision of 0.07ha per 1000 population based on the recent PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment and ensure this is reflected within the LDF.	TWC	S
5	To re-assess the procedures for leisure provision from Section 106 agreements to ensure that contributions can be provided from Developers contributions.	TWC	S
6	To ensure the proper procedures have been pursued in the event of any allotment sites becoming surplus to requirements.	TWC	S
7	To work towards all allotment sites meeting the recommended standards.	TWC AA PC	L

## 17.2 Key Theme 2

To ensure the benefits of allotment gardening are promoted to all sections of the Telford and Wrekin community.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
1	The production of advice leaflets covering all aspects of gardening on allotments e.g. Clearing an overgrown plot, Basic Skills, Organic Gardening, Increasing Biodiversity, Composting etc.	TWC	M
2	To provide notice boards on each allotment site detailing ownership as well as contact details and how to rent a plot.	TWC AA PC	S, M
3	A promotional campaign advertising the benefits of allotments focused on Doctors surgeries, libraries, leisure centres and health food shops.	TWC AA PC	M
4	Develop a website or web page on the TWC website dedicated to allotment gardening linked to complimentary sites such as the ARI, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.	TWC AA PC	M
5	To develop partnerships with organisations such as the PCT, community groups, local schools, County Council and Youth Groups to broaden the appeal of allotment gardening.	TWC PCT SCC Schools	M, L
6	To work with Allotment Associations and Parish Councils to offer advice sessions to encourage new gardeners.	TWC AA PC	S
7	To adapt plot sizes to suit different needs, looking at plot size, levels, access in relation to groups such as schools, youth clubs and groups with disabilities.	TWC AA PC	S, M
8	To appoint site stewards on TWC run sites to ensure that the allotment is being run properly and also to report any maintenance needs or comments from gardeners.	TWC	M
9	To encourage horticultural competitions on TWC sites as well as PC and AA sites.	TWC	M
10	To set up mechanisms for effectively communicating with allotment gardeners on all the TWC sites.	TWC	S
11	To ensure a pricing Policy is in place which does not discourage the economically disadvantaged from renting plots.	TWC	S

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
12	<p>For TWC to work with AA and PC and gardeners on directly managed sites to encourage sustainable gardening and good environmental practices through:</p> <p>a) Cultivated allotment plots offering the opportunity to use environmentally sensitive methods of gardening through the minimum use of chemicals (including organic alternatives to fertilizers) and recycling through composting;</p> <p>b) To offer advice and encourage the opportunities that arise for improved wildlife habitats in uncultivated sections of allotments and hedgerows.</p>	TWC AA PC	M, L

Note – current waiting lists so promoting will increase demand and add pressure on current provision!





### 17.3 Key Theme 3

To ensure allotments in Telford and Wrekin are managed and administered in the most effective and efficient way.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
1	To encourage Allotment Associations and Parish Councils to actively continue to manage their sites.	TWC AA PC	S, M
2	To have a formal procedure to annually review the administration of its allotment stock managed by <b>AA</b> and <b>PC</b> . This should include: occupancy levels, cultivation levels, waiting lists and a financial statement for the previous 12 months.	TWC AA PC	S, M
3	To obtain regular and up to date information on occupancy levels and cultivation levels at <b>Council</b> managed allotments sites.	TWC	S
4	To ensure that all sites encourage high levels of cultivation and have a policy or procedure for dealing with gardeners who rent plots but do not cultivate them.	TWC AA PC	S
5	To approach Allotment holders on the existing Council run sites to ascertain whether forming an Allotment Association is desirable or investigate the possibilities of devolving responsibilities to Parish Councils .	TWC PC	M
6	To review allotment charges annually in comparison with similar provision elsewhere.	TWC	S, M
7	To create and / or review every 5 years the licence between the Allotment Associations and the Council to ensure that it still meets the needs of both parties.	TWC AA	S, M

## 17.4 Key Theme 4

To ensure that resources match the needs of the service.

Reference	Action	Who	When
1	Prepare a revenue budget for each year to show the actual cost of operating each TWC site	TWC	S
2	To produce a 5-year cost maintenance and capital plan for the Council's allotment stock.	TWC	S
3	To consider the opportunities of external funding working with AA and PC as necessary.	TWC AA PC	S, M, L
4	To receive regular updates from TWS on the costs incurred in maintaining allotment sites	TWC TWS	S
5	The Council to review every 5 years the process and principles by which the rent charges are arrived at by benchmarking with neighbouring authorities and within the Borough itself	TWC	M
6	The Council to approve a policy for the disposal of any funds raised in the event of allotment land being disposed of and the element that will be reinvested in the remaining allotment stock.	TWC	M



## 18. Monitoring and Evaluation

A number of partners have been identified in relation to delivering this strategy which includes the following:

- TWC – Telford and Wrekin Council
- AA – Allotments Associations
- PC – Parish Councils
- PCT – Primary Care Trust
- SCC – Shropshire County Council
- SCH – Schools

An Allotments Forum or Partnership is to be established with representatives from each organisation that will be responsible for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this Allotments Strategy. It is important that representatives from the Planning Department are part of this forum as one of the key issues is overall lack of quantity in the District. The Allotments Forum/Partnership will also be responsible for developing an Allotments Charter as described above. This Charter could include the draft shown overleaf.



## Allotments – Charter (DRAFT)

The allotment charter describes our objectives and activities. We are committed to progressively improving the condition of our allotments.

### Our Objective

- Is to develop sites to provide secure, tidy and practical allotments; giving our plotholders the opportunity for healthy relaxation, pleasure and social contact;
- Is to encourage the maximum take up of plots by a wide range of residents; and
- Is to pursue a friendly and co-operative relationship with our plotholders leading to a partnership approach to managing the site.

### Our Assets

Each site is accessible by vehicle, fenced, gated and provided with a water supply.

Following the recent consultation with plotholders a number of actions have been put in place:

- **The Allotment Officer's Role** is to promote the effective use of allotments in conjunction with allotment tenants. Wherever possible requests for action are dealt with directly by the Allotments Officer/Allotments Association/Parish Council;
- **Maintaining Access** - Grassed roadways and pathways are maintained monthly between March and October. We ask allotment tenants to keep all items well away from the edge of paths to ensure clear access around the site;
- **A Number of Vacant Plots** on each site will be kept in a cultivated condition so that the condition of the plots does not act as a deterrent to potential tenants;
- **An Annual Programme of Works** will be prepared in conjunction with the Allotment Officer/Allotment Association/Parish Council taking in to account allotment holders' views. We will consider initiatives to maximise the use of available funding and attract additional resources. These will be prioritised in relation to need and available finance and be in addition to the regular maintenance required. In addition any fly tipping will be removed and essential minor repairs carried out;
- **Sites** will be kept tidy in partnership with allotment holders. We have a commitment to recycling and encourage plotholders to compost all green waste. To assist with disposal of non-compostable waste (e.g. plant pots, broken canes) there is a monthly collection of rubbish from each site. Plotholders are asked to bag items where possible and ensure that each bag weighs less than 15kg. It must be noted that this collection is for rubbish generated during the cultivation of allotments only and anyone observed bringing items on to the site will be prosecuted;
- **The Tenancy Agreement** will be reviewed annually to see if it needs to be updated or amended in any way. Particular attention will be given to the question of uncultivated plots. Tenants of such plots will be contacted and reminded of their obligations and the termination conditions. Hardship and illness will be taken into account but tenancy agreements will be terminated in the event of long term non-cultivation;
- **Allotments Forum** - We arrange an annual meeting each February which is open to all tenants. Council Members and Officers will be present to discuss any matters relevant to the running of allotments; and
- **Publicity** - We actively promote allotments and the health benefits of leisure gardening to all sections of the community.



## Appendices

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Appendix 2 - List of Sites in Telford and Wrekin

Appendix 3 - Procedure for Disposal of sites

Appendix 4 - Funding – ARI

Appendix 5 - Consultees

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The plot rent is based on an agreed square metre figure when the agreement with Telford and Wrekin Council was entered into with an annual inflation figure using the December Retail Price Index. This figure is then implemented the following April.

Allotment rental concessions of 50% may be granted. To qualify, one of the following criteria must be met and evidence provided:

- A) Income support
- B) State Requirement Pension;
- C) Job Seekers Allowance;
- D) Disability Living Allowance;
- E) Family Credit.

Charges will be reviewed by comparing with other similar Authorities at the discretion of the Council.

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Site	Managed/Details	Size and Status
Admaston Ringers Lane Admaston	Admaston Allotment Association	Size of Site – 10,848m2 2 year waiting list
Brookside Brookside Avenue Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	Waiting list 25 Plots in total Size of Site – 5,300 m2
Randlay Allotments Randlay Avenue Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	2 year waiting list Size of Site – 9,360m2 58 Plots in total
Wellington Wrekin View Road Wellington Telford	Telford & Wrekin Council	Waiting list closed. 59 Plots in total Size of Site – 11,828 m2
Leegomery Allotments	Leegomery Allotment Association	Waiting List closed 70 Plots Size of Site – 11,345 m2
Madeley West View West View Road Madeley Telford	Madeley Parish Council	Waiting List 10 Plots Size of Site – 1,055 m2
Sutton Hill Bridgnorth Road Sutton Hill Telford	Madeley Parish Council	Waiting List 52 Plots Size of Site - 7,727 m2
Newport Meadow Road	Newport Town Council	25 Plots Size of Site – 3,297m2
Newport Bougey Road	Newport Town Council	15 Plots Size of Site – 13,987 m2
Stirchley – Only for residents of Stirchley Parish	Stirchley Parish Council	2 year waiting list 42 Plots Size of Site – 5,100 m2
Woodside Beech Road Woodside	The Gorge Parish Council and Woodside Allotment Association	Waiting list 100 Plots Size of Site – 20,476 m2
Trench Rd Allotments Trench Telford	Parish Council Centre Wrockwardine Wood	26 Plots Size of Site – 4,000 m2

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There are two main types of allotment:

**Statutory allotments** are parcels of land acquired or appropriated by the local authority specifically for use of allotments. These sites cannot be sold or used for other purposes without the consent of the appropriate Secretary of State.

**Temporary allotments** are on land that is allocated for other uses but leased or rented by an allotments authority. Temporary allotments are not protected from disposal in the same way that statutory allotments are.

### **Disposal of allotment land**

Government guidance requires allotment authorities to consult with allotment holders before they apply for disposal. If the application goes ahead it will be dealt with by the respective Government Office for the region who will want to be satisfied of certain conditions:

- That the allotment is either not required or is surplus to requirements;
- The Council will give displaced plot holders adequate alternative sites, unless this is not necessary or is not practical;
- The Council has taken the number of people on the waiting list into account; and
- The Council has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and has consulted the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd (NSALG).

If the application is successful and allotment holders are displaced, the allotment authority is expected to provide one or more suitable alternative sites =, which should not normally be more than three – quarters of a mile from the centre of demand. They must be suitable for spade cultivation.

If an allotment authority ends a tenancy, the plot holder is entitled to compensation for:-

- Crops growing on the land in the ordinary course of cultivation;
- Manure applied to the land; and
- Up to one year's rent.

The Secretary of State's consent is not required for the disposal of non-statutory allotment sites, but the allotment authority will usually be required to give the plot holders 12 months notice to quit before the land can be used for any other purpose.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Fees and Charges Policy

Appendix 2 - List of Sites in Telford and Wrekin

Appendix 3 - Procedure for Disposal of sites

**Appendix 4 - Funding – ARI**

Appendix 5 - Consultees

Appendix 6 - Location Plans



### **Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)**

- Information on sources of funding and general advice

Tel: 0117 9631551

Email: [ari@farmgarden.org.uk](mailto:ari@farmgarden.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/>

### **Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service**

- If you require information about **funding** they may be available to assist groups

Tel: 01952 291350

Email: [micklloyd@tandwcvcs.org.uk](mailto:micklloyd@tandwcvcs.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.tandwcvcs.org.uk/>

### **Groundwork West Midlands**

- Groundwork is a leading environmental regeneration organisation, working in partnership for the benefit of local people, the local environment and local business.

Tel: 0121 236 8565

Email: [westmids@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:westmids@groundwork.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.groundworkwm.org.uk/index.asp?page=3>

### **Government Funding Website**

- Details of funding for voluntary and community organisations

Web: <http://www.governmentfunding.org.uk/>

## **Sustain**

- National on-line database of community food projects

Tel: 0207 8371228

Email: [sustain@sustainweb.org](mailto:sustain@sustainweb.org)

Web: <http://www.sustainweb.org/>

## **B&Q “Better Neighbour” Grant**

- Grants of between £50-£500 to help a community project get up and running.

Tel: 0800 0926556

Email: [environment.bq@b-and-q.co.uk](mailto:environment.bq@b-and-q.co.uk)

Web: [www.diy.com](http://www.diy.com)

## **Co-op Community Fund**

- Offer of cash to voluntary, self help, co-operative or not for profit organisations

Web: <http://www.co-operative.coop/membership/Community-Fund/>

## **Healthy Hearts**

- Supports projects which assist in overcoming Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

Web: [http://www.heartresearch.org.uk/healthy\\_heart\\_grants.htm](http://www.heartresearch.org.uk/healthy_heart_grants.htm)

## **Big Lottery Fund**

- Every year BIG gives out millions of pounds from the National Lottery to good causes. Their money goes to community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment.

Web: <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/>

### **Esmee Fairbairn Foundation**

- Education, environment and social development. Includes promoting sustainable food systems.

Tel: 020 72974700

Web: [esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

### **National Heart Research Fund**

- Priority areas are lifestyle interventions such as physical activity and healthy eating that help to prevent or reduce the risk factors of heart disease.

Web: <http://www.heartresearch.org.uk>

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All plot holders on Telford and Wrekin sites were consulted as well as all Allotment Associations and Parish Councils who currently manage sites. Parish Councils who currently do not have any provision were also consulted. The following responses were received:-

Telford and Wrekin Allotment Holders (62no.)

Telford and Wrekin Landscape and Recreation Service

Lawley and Overdale Parish Council

Oakengates Town Council

Rodington Parish Council

Newport Town Council

Madeley Parish Council

Stanmore Drive Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Society

Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Parish Council

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council

Waters Upton Parish Council

Edgmond Parish Council

Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council

The Gorge Parish Council

Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council

Little Wenlock Parish Council

Ketley Parish Council

Telford and Wrekin Allotment Associations



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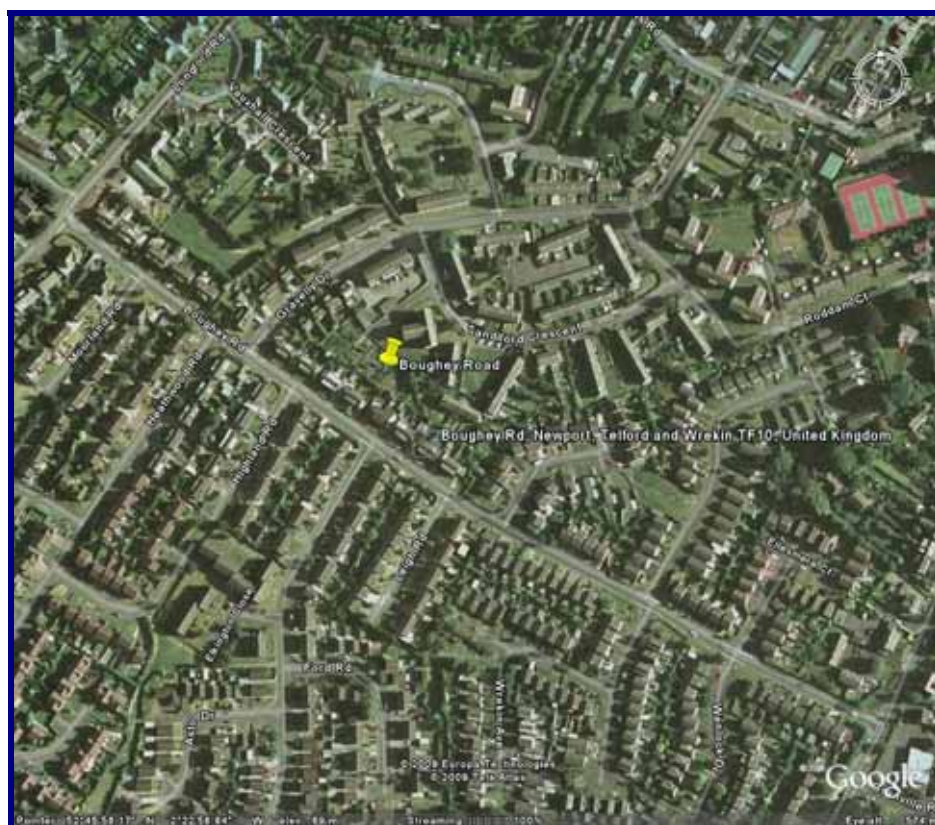
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Admaston

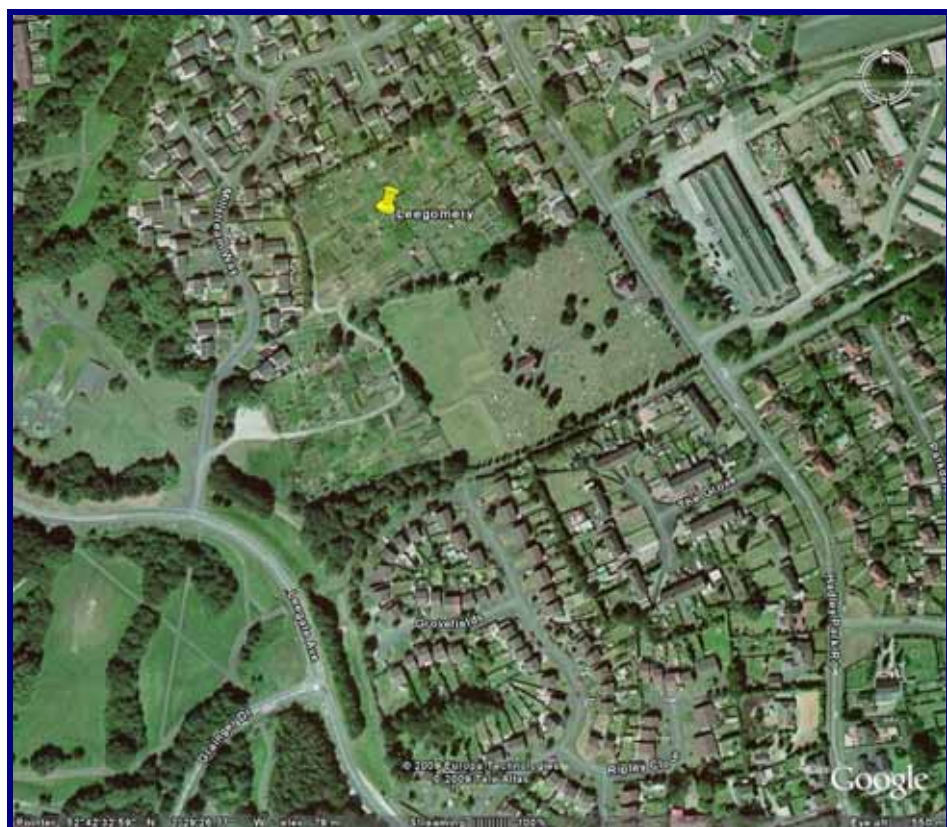


Boughey Road



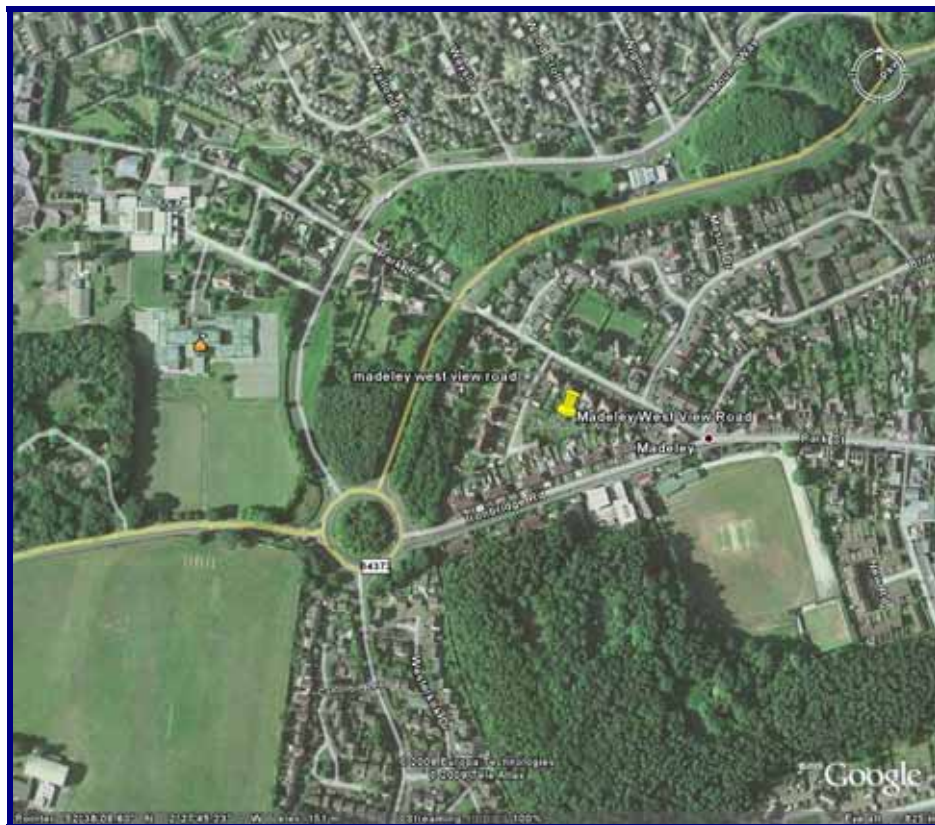


Brookside



Leegomery





Madeley



Newport



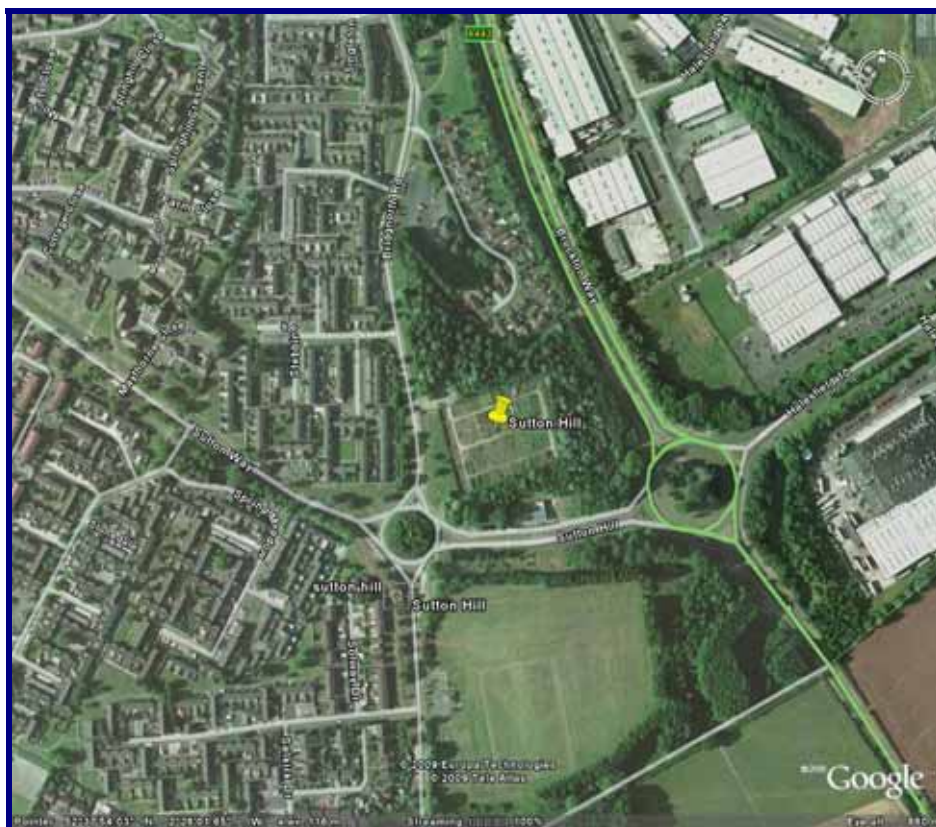


Randlay



Stirchley



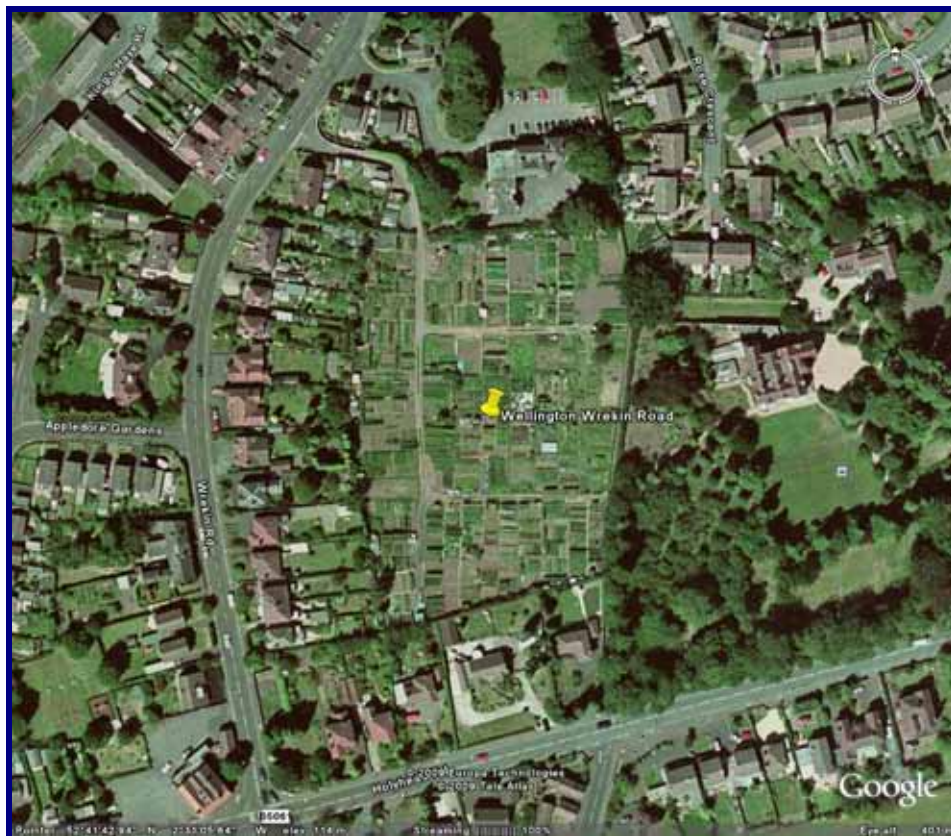


Sutton Hill



Trench Road





Wellington



Woodside





**Contact:**

**Telford and Wrekin Council  
Landscape and Recreation  
Community Services  
Walker House  
PO Box 59  
Telford  
TF3 4WZ**



[www.telford.gov.uk](http://www.telford.gov.uk)



**Halcrow**