



**Executive**  
20 August 2012

**Report from the Director of  
Environment and Neighbourhood  
Services**

Wards Affected: ALL

**Brent's Food Growing and Allotments Strategy**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides the Executive with an overview of Brent's Food Growing and Allotments Strategy. The strategy proposes a unified approach to the development of food growing provision in the borough.
- 1.2 The strategy was produced following a comprehensive consultation process and sets out a clear vision, set of objectives and action plan for food growing and allotment provision in Brent.

**2.0 Recommendations**

That the Executive

- 2.1 Note the findings of the strategy and agree its vision to "provide a range of food growing opportunities accessible to all parts of the community and to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle within a greener borough"
- 2.2 Agree the three inter linked objectives which have been formed to deliver the vision of the strategy, as set out in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.17
- 2.3 Agree the action plan to deliver the strategy (attached as Appendix 4)

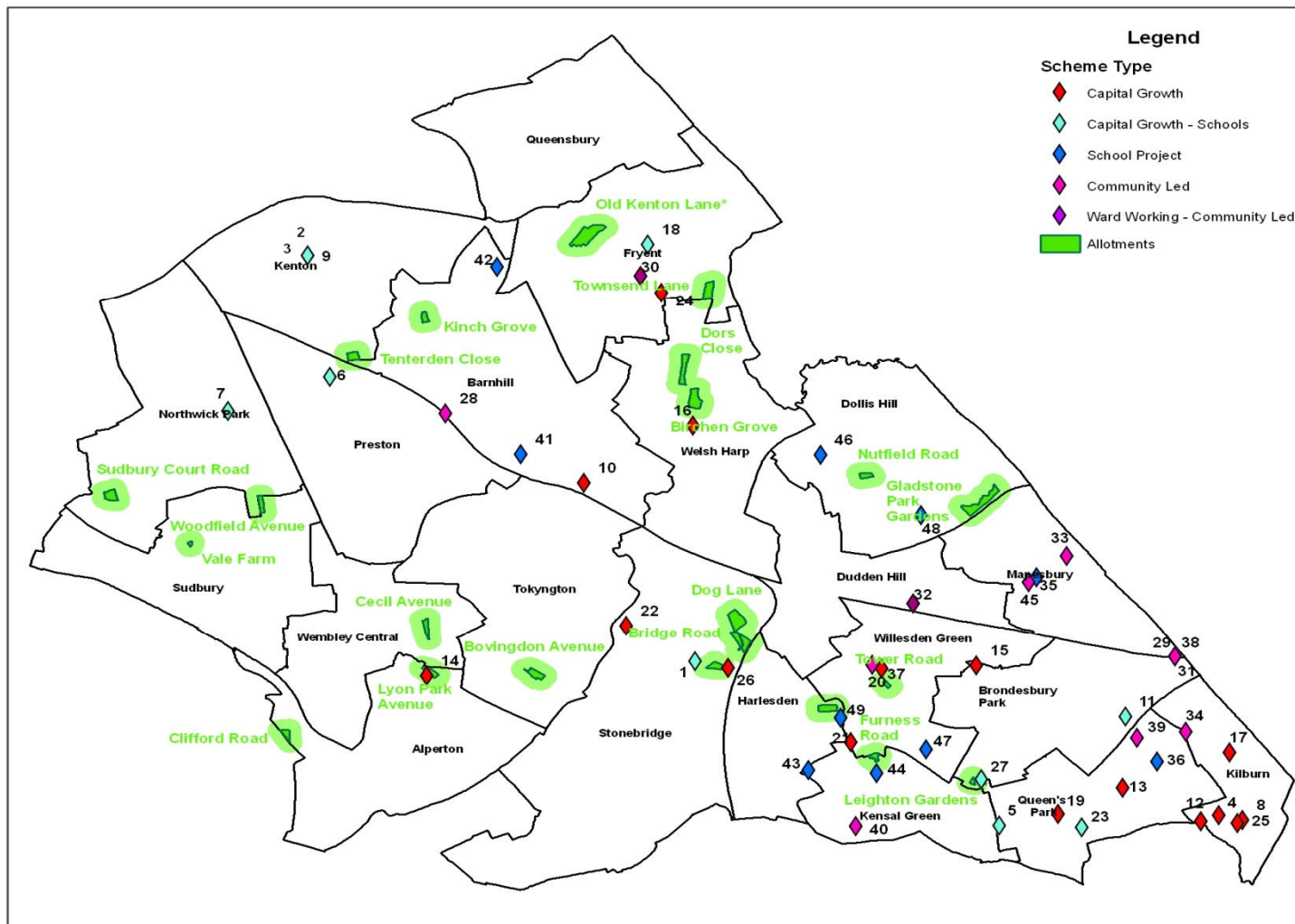
**3.0 Detail**


**Background**


- 3.1 The majority of allotment sites in Brent were created from the 1920s onwards and were initially very well used. In the 1980s there was a reduction in the number of sites following a decline in interest in keeping with the national picture. The reduced demand resulted in zero or minimal waiting lists at Brent

sites and, in some cases, allotment holders were allocated more than one plot upon request.

- 3.2 In recent years a strong revival of interest in food growing, linked to healthy eating and taking physical exercise, created a renewed demand for allotments and food growing spaces. The Local Government Association (LGA) has predicted that this demand will be on-going with a widening diversification of the profile of plot holders. In Brent this prediction is borne out when comparing the profile of waiting list applicants with the profile of current plot holders. It is likely that there will be an increase in the number of female plot holders and that more people under the age of fifty will be taking on new plots.
- 3.3 In recent years the council has invested significant capital funding in improving sites. An Allotments Officer post was created in 2002 and action plans and improvement schedules have been implemented over the past ten years. A clear strategic vision is now required to enable the council to meet the increased demand and to ensure the efficient and cost effective management of the allotment service.
- 3.4 The scope of the strategy unites food growing and allotment provision under a single vision, set of objectives and action plan. It covers all 22 allotment sites under the land management of the London Borough of Brent i.e. the 21 sites managed directly by the council and the self managed site at Old Kenton Lane. There are 1138 individual plots across the 22 allotment sites. There are currently 49 independent food growing spaces in the borough which operate on a communal basis with a group of people sharing a plot. Considerations for improved sustainability and biodiversity are also covered in the strategy.
- 3.5 The waiting list for allotment plots was updated in November 2011 with all 570 applicants being asked to confirm they wished to remain on the list as part of the consultation process. As of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 there were 268 applicants on the waiting list, representing a reduction of over 50%. This was largely due to the removal of applicants who were no longer interested or who had moved out of the area. There are two disused allotment sites, One Tree Hill and Vale Farm, where it is considered uneconomical to bring them back into use given that it is expected that, with the proposed better management, the allotment waiting list will disappear within three years.



  
**Allotments and Food Growing Sites in Brent**  
  
**Location and Scheme Type**  
  
**July 2012**



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 Z:\015 Projects\Allotments\Map Data June 2012\Food Growing Sites.mxd  
 2/8/2012  
 Produced by the GIS Development Team

## Development of the strategy

- 3.6 The development of the strategy was overseen by a steering group comprising officers from the Sports and Parks, Planning, Brent Housing Partnership and Environmental Projects and Policy service areas. A comprehensive two stage consultation process was undertaken to inform the production of the strategy.
- 3.7 To inform the draft strategy the first consultation stage was undertaken with allotment holders, waiting list applicants, site representatives, the Brent Allotments Forum, relevant council service areas and external stakeholders.
- 3.8 Over 500 survey questionnaires were completed by plot holders and waiting list applicants. This high response rate provided a wide range of evidence about how people garden, or intend to garden, their plot as well as feedback on priorities for the management and development of allotment sites. Detailed profiles of holders and applicants were compiled from the responses and a summary of the findings forms Section 4 of the strategy. One of the main findings is that the profile of waiting list applicants is more reflective of borough demographics with more women, families and younger people requiring an allotment compared with current holders. However, analysis of the profiles by the race characteristic shows that some ethnic groups within the borough are under represented in the case of both current holders and applicants.
- 3.9 Consultation meetings were held with stakeholders identified as having a key role to play in the development of food growing provision in the borough:
- Brent Council service areas – Regeneration and Major Projects, Planning, Customer and Community Engagement, Children and Families, Arts, Environmental Health and Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement
  - Brent Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords
  - NHS Brent
  - Brent Allotments Forum and Allotments Site Representatives
  - Brent Sustainability Forum
  - Capital Growth (independent food growing schemes) focus group.
- 3.10 The findings from the first stage of the consultation process directly informed the draft strategy and draft action plan which went out to public and stakeholder consultation from 12<sup>th</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. This consultation was undertaken through:
- An online questionnaire with paper copies available on request
  - Officer attendance at all five Area Consultative and all six Service User Consultative Forums
  - Three informal drop-in sessions primarily attended by plot holders and waiting list applicants
  - Meetings with the Brent Allotments Forum and Site Representatives
  - Consultation documentation available at libraries, sports centres and Brent Contact Points

- Notification letters distributed to plot holders, waiting list applicants and members of the Brent Sustainability Forum.
  - Coverage in the Brent Magazine and the local press.
- 3.11 Approximately 430 people attended one of the meetings where the draft strategy was discussed and 38 people completed a questionnaire. The latter number was slightly lower than anticipated but it is reasonable to conclude that this was a result of over 500 people having completed a questionnaire during the first stage of the consultation process. An average of 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the draft vision, individual objectives and action plan. 83 additional comments were submitted by 25 of the respondents. Where relevant and appropriate the strategy and action plan have been revised to reflect the feedback received.

## **Key Findings**

- 3.12 From the background research and two stage consultation process it has been possible to identify a number of headline findings which have influenced the three objectives and action plan priorities. These findings include:
- The tenancy agreement is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be reviewed and reissued to allotment plot holders
  - The role of Site Representatives and the election process require review
  - Consideration should be given to giving waiting list preference to Brent residents over non-residents
  - Larger plots should be reduced in size upon vacancy to increase the number of plots available and reduce waiting list times.
  - The fees and charges structure should be reviewed with consideration given to the introduction of differential pricing for residents and non-residents and the revision of concession rates to include an element of means testing.
  - Options should be explored with regard to extending the number of self-managed allotment sites.
  - Work needs to be undertaken on increasing engagement from under represented sections of the community as identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment.
  - There is huge scope for increased partnership working and the promotion of the wider benefits of food growing to schools, social housing, health providers and arts organisations to raise awareness, increase capacity and establish a network of advocates.
  - Although options for new permanent allotment sites are currently limited, there will be significant opportunities for the provision of temporary food growing sites, particularly in the Wembley and South Kilburn areas as part of regeneration projects.

- Ward working funding may be available for allotment sites and food growing projects and there is potential for closer collaboration between the council and independent food growing schemes to build on the work of the Brent Sustainability Forum.
- Future potential for the provision of raised bed schemes in parks and open spaces should be explored in appropriate areas which are identified as currently having an inadequate number of allotment sites and alternative food spaces.
- Stronger emphasis should be placed on the benefits of organic gardening, sustainable food supplies, land use and biodiversity as outlined in the council's Green Charter.

## Vision and Objectives

3.13 The overarching vision of the strategy is **“to provide a range of food growing opportunities accessible to all parts of the community and to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle within a greener borough.”**

3.14 Three key objectives have been identified in order to achieve the vision:

1. To provide efficiently managed allotment sites that offer good value for money and are accessible to all.
2. To develop and broaden the range of food growing opportunities available through partnership working.
3. To promote the benefits of food growing as part of a healthy lifestyle within a greener borough.

**Objective 1: To provide efficiently managed allotment sites that offer good value for money and are accessible to all.**

3.15 Key actions include:

- Undertaking a comprehensive audit of allotment sites and maintaining and improving site infrastructure and facilities
- Reviewing and reissuing the existing tenancy agreement; terminating existing agreements and issuing new tenancy agreements to all plot holders
- Reviewing fees and charges, including the potential to charge higher plot rental fees for non residents and reviewing criteria for concessions
- Establishing a streamlined administration process and communication protocol to clarify the role of site representatives and liaison arrangements with council officers
- Improving waiting list times by reletting plots more quickly, splitting larger plots upon vacancy, limiting new applicants to one plot and giving waiting list preference to Brent residents
- Reviewing existing provision, undertaking a needs analysis and identifying potential areas for future allotment and food growing sites. It is not intended to

extend the number of sites or to consider bringing former sites back into use until a review is undertaken a year after the implementation of the strategy.

**Objective 2: To develop and broaden the range of food growing opportunities available through partnership working.**

3.16 Key actions include:

- Extending the provision of temporary sites through closer joined up working with partners identified in the action plan and maximising the potential that the council's regeneration programme will offer.
- Working with independent food growing schemes and the Brent Sustainability Forum to provide an umbrella structure for the coordination of food growing spaces across Brent.
- Securing internal and external funding where relevant to improve facilities and broaden the range of food growing opportunities.

**Objective 3: To promote the benefits of food growing as part of a healthy lifestyle within a greener borough.**

3.17 Key actions include:

- Reinforcing the commitment of the council's Green Charter to improve sustainable food and land use, thereby encouraging biodiversity.
- Educating children and young people on environmental issues, both in the classroom and at food growing sites.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The strategy and the action plan will be delivered within existing revenue budgets. Actions requiring investment will be progressed as and when funding is available.

4.2 Council officers will work with the Brent Allotments Forum, allotment holders, food growing schemes and the Brent Sustainability Forum to obtain external grants, Section 106 funding and Ward Working money where appropriate.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 The current legislative provisions are contained in the Small Holdings and Allotment Acts 1908 and the Allotments Acts 1922-1950.

5.2 The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 places a duty on the council (where the council are of the opinion there is a demand for allotments) to provide sufficient allotments and that they be let to residents of the borough. There are also provisions regarding the letting of allotments to those who do not live in the borough. The various Acts relating to allotments provide for

tenancy agreements, rent, management arrangements and improvements to sites (which is a power not a duty).

- 5.3 For the purposes of the Council's role the duty relates to the provision of allotment gardens not exceeding one eighth of an acre (20 poles). An 'allotment garden' is described as a piece of land... which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family.
- 5.4 Allotment agreements can be ended on a number of bases under the legislation and can be varied with the agreement of the tenant, or by termination of the agreement on twelve months' notice and the reissuing on new terms.

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The s149 duty in the Equality Act 2010 provides that when a council exercises its functions, including the provision of allotments, it must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. While there is no evidence to suggest from the allotment strategy that there is any negative impact on any of the protected groups it is apparent that certain groups participate in the service less than others and that in order to advance equality of opportunity various proposals are made within the equality analysis to encourage participation of under represented groups.
- 6.2 Further consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment will be required if the fees and charges structure and concession arrangements are revised.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 None

## **Background Papers**

Food Growing and Allotments Strategy  
Appendices 1-4  
Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Contact Officers**

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