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Ms. Dolly Theis
request-40880-5d5c79a0@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: FOI/E6778

Date: 04 August 2010

Dear Ms.Theis,

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Request for Information: Information Supplied
Please quote our reference: E6778
Subject: Land for allotments or growing spaces**

We write with regard to your request for information held by the Council under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We trust that the information provided is satisfactory. You are free to use the information for your personal use only. Any other type of re-use, for example, publishing the information or issuing copies to the public will require permission of the copyright owner. If the Council is the copyright owner, a licence can be applied for under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005.

For future reference we publish information on our website, including the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and summary of Freedom of Information requests and responses that may be of help to you in searching for information. Our website is mentioned above.

It is important to note that under the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 the Council asks not to receive unsolicited marketing communication.

Request and response:

1. What land for allotments or growing spaces, both private and public, have you requested in the last 5 years?

Answer: Assuming this question is referring to new land made available by the Council for growing spaces in addition to existing allotment sites, please see the response to question 5 below.

2. From the land requested in the last 5 years, what land has not been put into use for your residents to grow on?

Answer: Please see the response to question 5 below for projects involving informal food growing projects – i.e. that do not take place on statutory allotment sites.

3. How many planning applications do you currently have which could be used to make a Section 106 requirement for land to grow on?

Answer: Currently officers are not aware of any submitted planning applications which offer scope to secure land for food growing. Discussions are understood to be taking place regarding a possible improvement / enlargement of one site, but a planning application has yet to be submitted.

You should note that there is no statutory planning policy in place in either the adopted London Plan or Newham Unitary Development Plan which requires land for growing to be created as a consequence of development. Government planning guidance (in ODPM Circular 1/2005) requires Section 106 planning obligations to be fairly and reasonably related to a particular development.

Current Planning Policies

London Plan Policy 3D.8 'Realising the value of open space and green infrastructure' - notes that policies in Development Plan Documents (DPDs) should treat the open space network as an integrated system that provides a "green infrastructure" containing many uses and performing a wide range of functions, including for health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, culture, biodiversity and the environment.

Policy 3D.12 'Open space strategies' - requires local authorities to prepare an open space strategy to protect, create and enhance all types of open space in their area, including positive management of open space where appropriate to prevent or remedy degradation or enhance the beneficial use of it for the community.

Policy 3D.11 'Open space provision in DPDs' - requires local authorities' development plan policies to:

- identify and support Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities;
- identify broad areas of public open space deficiency and priorities for addressing them on the basis of audits carried out as part of an open space strategy, and using the open space hierarchy set out in Table 3D.1 as a starting point;
- ensure that future open space needs are considered in planning policies for Opportunity Areas and other areas of growth and change in their area;
- encourage functional and physical linkages within the network of open spaces and to the wider public realm, improve accessibility for all throughout the network and create new links based on local and strategic need; and
- identify, promote and protect Green Corridors and Green Chains and include appropriate designations and policies for the protection of local open spaces that are of value, or have the potential to be of value, to local communities.

As indicated above, there is no specific reference to allotments or local food growing in the current London Plan. However, this could be one of the varied functions of open space covered by the policies, and would be dealt with in Newham's Local Development Framework being prepared now. A public consultation will take place during the Autumn.

The present Newham plan policy on allotments - UDP policy OS13 - seeks to protect existing allotment sites and utilise poor quality open space and vacant and derelict sites for use as allotments.

The draft London Plan has a specific policy for local food growing (Policy 7.22 - Land for Food). It will require local authorities to protect existing allotments and identify other potential spaces that could be used for community gardening, to help compensate for the lack of statutory allotments, particularly in Inner London. The draft replacement London Plan is going through its public examination this Summer.

4. What targets are in place to increase the use of Section 106 to provide more land for your residents to grow on ?

Answer: There are no current targets in place, but we are aware of policy developments to encourage such schemes (see above), and the Open Space Strategy being developed will consider how the borough's resource of open space and vacant land can be best used for the community including land for growing food.

5. What is currently being done in your borough to provide alternative land for residents to grow on ?

Answer: Improving existing allotments and maximising opportunities for local food growing are wider corporate and LDF objectives which will contribute to improved social cohesion, improved health and wellbeing and would be supported in policy terms, although the overall strategy for allotments would be determined by Culture through an Open Space Strategy which will be prepared this year and subject to public consultation. Lengthy allotment waiting lists are being addressed primarily through the letting of 'half-plots'.

There are a number of growing projects underway in the borough, managed by the Council, Schools, Community Centres and local groups. Please find attached for information a summary of Newham's schemes (taken from the GLA's Capital Growth project website). To date successful food growing spaces have been developed by the Council in Bakers Row (formerly derelict open space), Valetta Grove (a disused ball court on housing land) and at the Memorial Recreation Ground.

Please note that this does not cover schools growing space as we do not hold the records for schools.

If you require any further information or are not happy with our response please do not hesitate to contact a member of our team on (020) 8430 3737 or email us at information.governance@newham.gov.uk.

Yours Sincerely,

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Newham Council