

Watford Borough Council

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5 St Philips Place
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BIRMINGHAM
B3 2PW
By Special Delivery

Phone no: 01923 27 8357

Our reference: NK/NK/W10015/2096

Your reference:

Date: 14 September 2012

Dear Sirs

RE: Application for Appropriation of Willow Lane Allotments, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 OJA

The Council request the Secretary of States consent to appropriate the Willow Lane Allotments for change of use/disposal for the benefit of the Watford Health Campus Scheme. The Council makes this request pursuant to Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925.

The enclosed questionnaire and appendices provide details the following:

1. Reasons why the allotment is not necessary and surplus to requirement;
2. As the allotments have been disused for over 25 years, there are no plot holders that have been displaced, therefore no provision is required for relocating plot holders;
3. The number of people on the general waiting list has been taken into account, those who remain on the list often do so as a result of personal preference of location rather than as a result of allotments not being available;
4. The Council has consulted and has been provided a letter of support from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners ("NSALG") enclosed as appendix B of this application;
5. The Council's questionnaire enclosed confirms that there has been full consideration of the relevant policies, in particular development plan policies.

The documents enclosed with this application and the questionnaire provides robust evidence supporting the Council's request to appropriate the disused statutory allotments. In addition the Council intends to provide financial support to the NSALG as detailed in Appendix D1.

I thank you for consideration of this application and look forward to your positive response written in this regard.

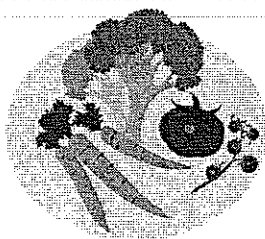
Yours sincerely

Nazma Khamisa
Senior Solicitor
Legal & Property Services



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Information Needed To Consider Consent To Dispose Of Allotments



Details of the allotment to be disposed of	Willow Lane Allotments, Watford, Herts
The name and address of the site to be	Willow's Allotment, Willow Lane, Watford. WD 18 0JA
Are they allotments statutory? (Consent of the Secretary of State is not required for NON statutory allotments)	Statutory
Nature of disposal? (i.e. appropriation from allotment use to another Council use/sale/lease licence)	<p>The site has been out of use for over 25 years+ and is now colonised by trees and scrub. The site is to be appropriated into the proposed Watford Health Campus redevelopment scheme. This allotment site is not necessary and is surplus to requirements.</p> <p>The Borough is seeking a change of use in readiness for onward transfer/sale into the proposed regeneration vehicle that will redevelop the hospital/campus site.</p> <p>We expect to shortly establish a joint venture company (in the form of a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV)) whereby the PSP/LABV will enter contracts with both the Council and WHHT to deliver their requirements from the Campus.</p>
If lease licence – what is the length of time?	Not applicable.
What is the proposed future use of the land? i.e. residential, playing fields etc)	<p>The Watford Health Campus development Masterplan has formally been granted outline planning permission on June 2010 which establishes the principles of development on the site. These principles for development consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The reprovision of a general hospital (Watford General Hospital); (Present designs for the new hospital accommodation is to be arranged on four floors over a three storey car parking and service accommodation. The principal entrances (Main, A&E Walk-in and Mother & Child Entrances) are placed along the north side, whilst Ambulance and Service entrances are discretely placed along the west side. This design may change) ▪ c.500 new homes; ▪ 25,000 sq. m. of commercial floorspace; ▪ 15,000 sq. m. hotel, leisure and hospitality facilities; ▪ Sustainable energy provision; ▪ Associated delivery of improved infrastructure and public realm; and ▪ Reconfigured improved green infrastructure.

	<p>This is a major mixed use scheme, which will be developed by a consortium working together to redevelop this 26.5 hectare site. See Appendix A.</p> <p>Also within the Scheme new areas of Public Open Space are being created.</p> <p>In order to deliver this scheme, for the benefit of west Watford and the wider area, the Council is now wishing to appropriate these disused allotments.</p> <p>Although Planning was obtained a few years ago, regrettably this matter of Appropriating the allotments was not progressed.</p>
<p>Are there any local development plan implications? (i.e. was the site identified for closure? Zoned for housing etc Policy supporting L/A requirement to provide allotments)</p>	<p>The Council's saved policy from Watford District Plan (adopted in 2003) relating to Allotments states:</p> <p>Policy L12 Allotments</p> <p>The Council will protect existing public and private allotments (those within open areas of 0.8 hectares or more in size and not within the Green Belt are identified on the Proposals Map) and will ensure equivalent replacement where affected by development proposals.</p> <p>Where allotments become surplus to demand, other forms of public open space or facilities for the wider community which maintain the openness of the site, will be preferred before other land uses are considered.</p> <p>The Watford Health Campus Masterplan submitted to the local planning authority in 2007. It was also submitted to the Secretary of State through the Government Office for the East of England as a "departure" from the local development plan. In their dated 27 August 2008. The letter states that the Secretary of State was satisfied that the Council's consideration of issues has been both thorough and comprehensive and that they have addressed and taken account of the relevant policies in reaching their conclusion to grant planning permission for the Health Campus scheme. It was for this reason that the Secretary of State did not call in the application for her own determination.</p> <p>Specifically one of the issue that was considered related to open space and recreation uses:</p> <p>"meeting the sports, open space and recreation requirements of the whole community by protecting existing facilities and securing appropriate new provision."</p> <p>Copy of the letter is attached (Appendix B).</p> <p>Watford Borough Council has an emerging Core Strategy which was considered by Examination in Public between 12 – 19 June 2012.</p> <p>The Core Strategy identifies a number of "Special Policy Areas"</p>

(SPAs) which form an important part of the spatial strategy. Watford Health Campus is designated as SPA3. These SPAs areas have special policy status due to there being a significant level of change expected in the area, or a particular need for some change, either in terms of new development and infrastructure or through wider opportunities for improvements to be made to the physical environment.

Policy SPA 3 Health Campus

Objective

To deliver a major mixed use development project providing a new quarter for west Watford which seeks to provide new housing, jobs and community facilities with the catalyst of a significantly enhanced new acute hospital. This new quarter will be integrated seamlessly with the existing surrounding neighbourhoods, and will enhance the local services and amenities for the existing local communities in west Watford.

Proposals

- Improved major acute hospital providing new facilities for patients and staff
- Residential development, including affordable housing
- Commercial office development
- Local centre shops and community facilities
- Leisure facilities including the support of Watford Football club as an important local asset
- New combined heat and power plant
- New road access arrangements to alleviate congestion on Vicarage Road and site circulation improvements to assist walking and cycling
- Traffic signalling improvements to Junction 5 of the M1 motorway
- Improved quality and quantity of green infrastructure

Design and Sustainability

The new development should where possible provide good physical, social and economic links into the existing West Watford community.

The new development should be of high quality design making the most of opportunities for energy conservation, renewable energy provision and water recycling.

The new development should maintain and add to open space for recreational and biodiversity purposes to further promote the health of the community.

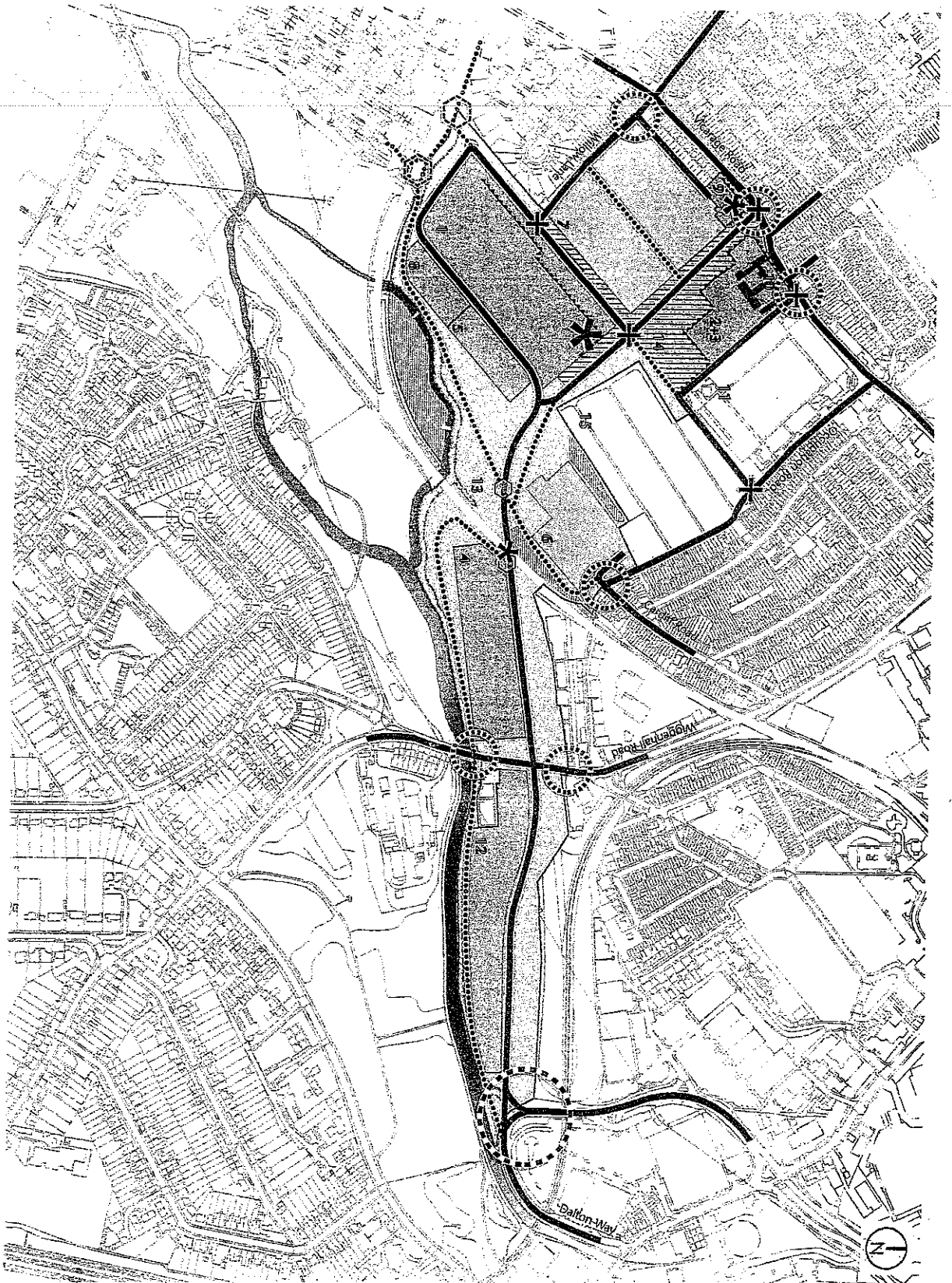
The new development should provide local employment opportunities and affordable and key worker housing to promote a viable community and a local economy with a reduced reliance on private

	<p>transport.</p> <p>Delivery</p> <p>The procurement process for the project is ongoing. Any changes proposed to the approved outline permission should take account of the spatial strategy and infrastructure requirements set out in this Core Strategy. Any changes should positively contribute to the emerging new neighbourhood and be complementary to the town centre. Additional primary school provision at the site would be beneficial for the town, should an opportunity arise for its inclusion in the scheme.</p> <p>The are no unresolved issues with respect to Policy SPA 3. The Council has not received any objections.</p> <p>The Core Strategy is programmed to be adopted in the Autumn of 2012.</p> <p>Willow's Allotments were listed as a statutory allotments in the district Plan. The Watford Health Campus scheme would see the reconfiguration and provision of new public open space.</p> <p>The District Plan notes there are 13 statutory allotments serving the Watford population but that the distribution is poor with a particular shortage in the high density residential areas of North and Central Watford. It highlights that the opportunity to provide new sites will be very limited so it is therefore important to retain existing sites where a demand exists. It also acknowledges the existing Allotment Strategy and that the policies in the District Plan are intended to complement the Allotment Strategy.</p> <p>It should also be noted that within close proximity there are large areas of Public Open Space and the Watford Health Campus project will also be providing considerable extra areas of Public Open Space.</p> <p>The proposal to change the status of these redundant allotments is identified as a key priority in the Corporate Plan</p> <p>The implications of this appropriation has already taken into account all pertinent planning policies.</p>
What is the area of the allotments to be disposed of and the total number of plots that will be lost.	<p>Willow allotments are 3.24 Acres (1.31 Ha) in size. The site has been closed and unused for over 25-years. It is currently self generated woodland. No records are held of the number of plots which were historically used. Ultimately, no plots are lost since the area is now colonised by trees and scrub.</p> <p>Due to the very steep topography across the site, it is understood that only 30% (1.0 acres) was actual formally and historically used for allotment plots/purposes.</p>
How many plots are in use and how many not in use?	<p>None are in use for at least 25-years and it was understood to have been in terminal decline for years preceding its closure</p>
How many plot holders are affected	<p>None</p>
Alternative site provision	

The name and address of the proposed new allotment site.	Not applicable.
Area of proposed alternative allotment site and number of plots to be provided	Not applicable
Publicity	
Details of / or copies of publicity showing that the proposed disposal and alternative provision has been actively publicised.	<p>Not applicable – No publicity required in this instant.</p> <p>The issue of the loss of the Willow Lane allotments was considered as part of the Health Campus planning application and was identified as one of six areas of departure from the Watford District Plan 2000.</p> <p>To ensure the proposed appropriation is legal and effective the Council's Property Portfolio Holder has approved the request for the site status to be changed and Appropriated into the Watford Health Campus scheme – See Appendix C</p>
Details/ or confirmation that the local authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites. Confirmation that the NSALG has been consulted on the proposals and copies of their views.	<p>Promotion of the Council's allotments is via the attached web-link: http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/environment-and-planning/parks-and-open-spaces/allotments/</p> <p>The local NSALG representative for the Eastern Region (Karen Kenny) has been consulted and is satisfied that this redundant allotment can be taken out of allotment use and no substitute re-provision is required. See Appendix D1 and D2</p>
Do the NSALG support the proposals.	Yes - NSALG supports the Appropriation of these redundant allotments into the Watford Health Campus scheme
Confirmation that existing plot holders been consulted on the proposal to dispose including the alternative land offered	Not applicable.
Demand for allotments	
How many people are on the Council's waiting list?	Watford BC has 13 separate allotments in it Borough. Overall there are circa 60 people on its waiting list, but occupancy rates are 92%.
How many people are waiting for plots on the subject site?	None (Not Applicable)
How many plot holders are affected?	None (Not Applicable) – An abandoned site.
Information how the number of people on the waiting list will be or has effectively been taken into account by the council.	<p>Across the Borough, the waiting list is relatively short and is generally related to people wanting plots on specific sites.</p> <p>The Allotment review in 2011/12 has developed a new strategy for allotments and was based on a major survey of all plot holders across the Borough with a 42% return. The Council continues to promote allotments across the town with occupancy rates high and the waiting list getting shorter. There are 13 sites in Watford totalling just over 28 hectares (69 Acres). This is equal to 0.34 ha per 1000 people (3.4m2 per person). Provision per head of population in Watford is also higher than the recommendation by the NSALG.</p> <p>The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per</p>

	<p>1000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on 2 people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.125 hectares per 1000 population (1.25m2 per person) based on an average plot size of 250m2</p> <p>See Appendix F (Draft Allotment Strategy)</p>
Sites identification required	
Plan of proposed disposal site and Also a plan of the replacement land that is to be provided. (Plans must outline the boundaries of the land in a distinctive manner).	<p>See Appendix A</p> <p>No replacement Land is being proposed.</p>
Details Above Should Be Considered Against The Criteria Set Out In DTLR Letter Dated 27 Feb 2002 And Re-Iterated In CLG Letter Of 1 July 2009:	There are no identified financial cost implications to the community
The allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirements	Having been abandoned for in excess of 25-years it is self-evident that these allotments serve no useful purpose and should legitimately be Appropriated into the Watford Health Campus scheme for the wellbeing of the community at large.
Adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders or that such provision is not necessary or impractical	<p>Adequate Allotment provision is made elsewhere within the Borough.</p> <p>The Council recognises that allotments are valuable green spaces and community assets providing people with the opportunity to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of environmental sustainability, health and well-being, community cohesion and social inclusion</p>
The number of people on the waiting list has effectively been taken into account	Not Applicable.
The authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and consulted the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners	Watford BC has consulted with NSALG representative who are supportive of this Appropriation.
The implications of disposal for other relevant policies in particular development plan policies have been taken into account	Yes the Council's planning policies support this Appropriation.

(APPENDIX A)



- ☐ Development Boundary
- ☐ Watercourse
- ☐ Green / Ecological Buffer
- ☐ Flood Alleviation
- ☐ Vehicle / Cycle / Pedestrian Routes
- ☐ Cycle / Pedestrian Routes Only
- ☐ Active Frontage
- ☐ Landmark
- ☐ Restricted Access
- ☐ Vehicle / Cycle / Pedestrian Access
- ☐ Cycle / Pedestrian Access Only
- ☐ Lifts
- ☐ Hospital Zone
- Hub Zones:**
 - ☐ 1 Hospital Zone
 - ☐ 2 Hub Building
 - ☐ 3 Hotel / Mixed Use
 - ☐ 9 Landmark Building
 - ☐ 11 Listed Building
 - ☐ 14 Public Realm
- Residential Zones:**
 - ☐ 7 Viarage Road
 - ☐ 6 Cardiff Road
- Lakeside Zones:**
 - ☐ 5 B1 / Office / Research
 - ☐ 8 Trigen Plant
- Riverside Zones:**
 - ☐ 4 B1 / Office / Research
 - ☐ 12 Outdoor Leisure / Sports
- The Park Zone:**
 - ☐ 13 Outdoor Recreation

Title: Development Framework
 Reference: AVAL1000-DF-002
 Date: May 2008
 Scale: 1:5000 @ A3

STRATEGIC LAND USE SCHEDULE

Development Zone	Floorspace Maximum sq. m	Appropriate Uses (with maximum floorspaces where applicable)											Building Height Maximum (m)
		Hospital	Residential	A1/A2/A3	Office / Creche	Civic / Education	Leisure	Hotel	B1	B8	CHP	Self Parking (Maximum)	
1	74,000	✓										1,500	30 m (86 m AOD)
2 and 3	19,720		✓	✓ (max. 5,005 sqm)	✓	✓		✓				415 (zone 2, 3, 9, 10)	12 m (80 m AOD)
4	8,500								✓			140	12 m (63 m AOD)
5	4,800								✓			80	12 m (67 m AOD)
6	11,540		✓									160	14 m (64 m AOD)
7	35,000		✓									200	16 m (86 m AOD)
8	2,500										✓	-	12 m (67 m AOD)
9	2,880		✓	✓ (max. 750 sqm)	✓				✓			See Zone 2	10 m (78 m AOD)
10	2,600				✓							See Zone 2	As existing.
12	N/A						✓						N/A
13	N/A						✓						N/A
14	N/A						✓						N/A

Title: Development Parameters Zones 1-10 and 12-14
Reference: AVAL1000-DF-003
Date: May 2008

GO-East



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Development Manager
Watford Borough Council
Town Hall
Watford
Hertfordshire WD17 3EX

**For the attention of Mr Paul Baxter,
Team Leader, Major Cases**

27 August 2008

Lindsay Speed
Development & Infrastructure
Eastbrook
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Our Ref: E1/Y1945/02/03/11
Your Ref: 07/00958/OUTM

Dear Sir

**WATFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL AND SURROUNDING LAND, WATFORD
DEVELOPMENT OF A MIXED USE HEALTH CAMPUS COMPRISING MAJOR
ACUTE HOSPITAL (CLASS C2), OFFICE AND RESEARCH FACILITIES (CLASS
B1), RETAIL, FINANCIAL AND RESTAURANT USES (CLASS A1, A2 AND A3),
HOTEL (CLASS C1), RESIDENTIAL (CLASS C3), CLINICS, CRECHE AND
NURSERY (CLASS D1), FORMAL LEISURE FACILITIES (CLASS D2),
COMBINED HEAT AND POWER PLANT, NEW LAKE AND INFORMAL LEISURE
FACILITIES AND NEW LINK ROAD FROM DALTON WAY.**

I refer to your letter of 18 July 2008 referring to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999, the planning application detailed above. On 8 August 2008 the Secretary of State directed under Article 14 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, that your Council should not grant planning permission on this application without specific authorisation. This Direction was issued to enable the Department to have a further period in which to consider the application.

As you may know, the Secretary of State's general approach is not to interfere with the jurisdiction of local planning authorities unless it is necessary to do so. Parliament has entrusted them with responsibility for day-to-day planning control in their areas. Local planning authorities are normally best placed to make decisions relating to their areas and it is right that in general, they should be free to carry out their duties responsibly, with the minimum of interference.

There will be occasions, however, when the Secretary of State may consider it necessary to call in a planning application to determine herself instead of leaving it to the local planning authority. Her policy is to be very selective about calling in

planning applications. She will, in general, only take this step if planning issues of more than local importance are involved and if those issues need to be decided by the Secretary of State rather than at a local level. Each case is, however, considered on its own facts.

We have carefully considered all the matters raised regarding this application. The issue before the Secretary of State for decision is not whether the application should be granted planning permission, but whether or not she should call it in for her own determination. In particular, in deciding whether or not this case raises issues which would justify a decision by her rather than the local planning authority, the Secretary of State considers that the main matters relevant to her decision are her policies with regard to:

- (i) continued strong economic performance, continuing regeneration and renewal that makes the most of urban capacity, expansion of higher order services and greater reliance on public transport (Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, Policy LA4: Watford Key Centre for Development and Change);
- (ii) promoting high quality, inclusive design in terms of function and impact, which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area (PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development);
- (iii) delivering housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure (PPS3: Housing);
- (iv) promoting economic growth of regional, sub-regional and local economies (PPS6: Planning for Town Centres);
- (v) adequate provision being made for development and economic growth whilst ensuring effective conservation and enhancement of the diversity of England's wildlife and geology (PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation);
- (vi) providing adequate waste management facilities for the re-use, recovery and disposal of waste (PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management);
- (vii) actively managing the pattern of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport; focus major generators of travel demand in city, town and district centres and near to major public transport interchanges; and locate day to day facilities in local centres, to be accessible by walking or cycling (PPG13: Transport);
- (viii) the protection of buildings listed for their special architectural or historic interest, and their settings (PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment);



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- (ix) meeting the sport, open space and recreation requirements of the whole community by protecting existing facilities and securing appropriate new provision (PPG17: Sport, Open Space and Recreation); and
- (x) ensuring that planning applications are supported by site-specific flood risk assessments (FRAs) as appropriate (PPS25: Development and Flood Risk).

Having considered carefully these and other relevant planning issues raised by this proposal, together with all representations received, and having regard to her policy on call in, the Secretary of State has concluded on balance that intervention would not be justified as there is not sufficient conflict with national planning policies on the above matters, or any other sufficient reason, to warrant calling in the application for her own determination.

The Secretary of State is satisfied that the Council's consideration of the issues has been both thorough and comprehensive and that they have addressed and taken account of the relevant policies in reaching their conclusion to grant planning permission for the Health Campus proposal. She has therefore decided that she should leave the decision on whether or not to grant planning permission in this case to the local planning authority. In exercise of her powers under Article 27 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, the Secretary of State hereby cancels the direction issued in her letter of 8 August 2008.

A copy of the permission that may be granted by the Council for the development should be sent to the Secretary of State at the above address in accordance with paragraph 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999.

Yours faithfully



LINDSAY SPEED
Head of Planning Casework



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PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION

1.	DECISION TITLE	Willow Lane Allotments Watford (S106)
2.	DATE OF DECISION	19 July 2012
3.	PORTFOLIO HOLDER MAKING DECISION	Dorothy Thornhill, Elected Mayor of Watford
4.	OFFICERS PRESENT	Manny Lewis, Managing Director
5.	DECISION TAKEN	That if future S106 contributions come for Open Space, that up to £200,000 is allocated to allotments improvements. There is no time period for this re-investment.
6.	HOW DECISION WAS REACHED (i.e. factors taken into account in reaching this decision)	Portfolio Holder report attached
6.	DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN (to be completed by Democratic Services)	Friday 27 July 2012

- Please return to Democratic Services within three days of the decision being taken to allow time for call-in (6 days from date of decision).
- Remember that a decision cannot be implemented until the call in period has passed.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION

1.	DECISION TITLE	Willow Lane Allotments Watford
2.	DATE OF DECISION	9 July 2012
3.	PORTFOLIO HOLDER MAKING DECISION	Councillor Iain Sharpe Planning and Property
4.	OFFICERS PRESENT	Carol Chen Head of Legal and Property
5.	DECISION TAKEN	To apply to the Secretary of State to remove the allotment status from the Willow Lane site.
6.	HOW DECISION WAS REACHED (i.e. factors taken into account in reaching this decision)	Portfolio Holder report attached
6.	DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN (to be completed by Democratic Services)	Tuesday 17 July 2012

- Please return to Democratic Services within three days of the decision being taken to allow time for call-in (6 days from date of decision).
- Remember that a decision cannot be implemented until the call in period has passed.

Published to web – 2/8/12

Willow Lane Allotments

Report to: Elected Mayor and Property Portfolio Holder
Date of meeting: July 2012
Report of: Watford Health Campus
Title: Willow Lane Allotments, Watford

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out details of this vacant former allotments site (Willow Lane) and proposed application to the Secretary of State for consent to change the use and disposal as part of the Health Campus development.
- 1.2 No substitute (replacement) of Allotment Land will be arising out of this arrangement but it is proposed that a small amount of money to be invested into allotments to gain NSALG approval and a potential commitment of more.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council's Portfolio Holder for Property agrees to the submission to the Secretary of State for Consent and requests the Secretary's agreement to agree to the change of use and subsequent disposal.
- 2.2 The Property Portfolio Holder and Mayor approves and notes:
- The Undertaking to the NSALG (The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners) to
 - invest £50,000 if they support this application. Such monies will be found from the WHC budget and Community Services budgets.
 - Commit to a future allocation (investment) of between £100,000 to £200,000 of S.106 contributions (Monies). WBC commitment will be caveated to the extent that sufficient S106 contributions are made.
- 2.3 The capital receipt from such disposal will be part of the capital receipts from the wider Campus redevelopment in accordance with the land equalisation deal with WHHT.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:
Tom Dobrashian Development Director Tel. 01923 278 194
Email: tom.dobrashian@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Manny Lewis

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Willow Lane Allotments have not had any tenants for over 25-years. It was never a

popular site and from those that remember, it was a difficult site to cultivate and had been in decline for many years prior to it being 'abandoned'.

- 3.2 The site has an area of approximately 0.611 Ha (Acres) and is situated to the north of the Cardiff Road Industrial estate.
- 3.3 This unused site has effectively become a self-seeded woodland area. The site topography is steep and falls away sharply from north to south. It has become an overgrown and disused site. Significant areas of the site (90%) are shaded by mature tree.
- 3.4 The site was identified as part of a possible location for the redevelopment of the New Hospital complex within the Watford Health campus Scheme. This ensures maximum use of the overall Watford Health Campus site.
- 3.5 The Land is held by the Council under the Allotment Act. Accordingly it will be necessary for the Council to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State prior to disposal and change in use. The land can only be taken out of allotment use with the consent of the appropriate Secretary of State.
- 3.6 Part of the process to change the status of allotments and an integral part of the application to the SoS is consultation with NSALG (The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners). The NSALG is the recognised national representative body for the allotment movement in the UK. The local representative for the NSALG has in principle agreed to support this specific application provided an 'additional' investment in other Borough allotments is made.
- 3.7 There is a risk that if the proposal was not supported by the NSALG prior to the application to Secretary of State appropriating this land out of statutory allotments and disposing of land would be refused and/or challenged.
- 3.8 Officers led by Paul Rabbitts have had detailed discussions with NSALG. Quite unreasonably (in our opinion) the NSLAG representative at first sought replacement of these disused allotments. After further deliberations they wanted the land value to be re-invested for the wider benefit of allotments in the Borough. Following negotiations to gain their support for this application we are recommending that £50,000 is invested in other allotments if they support this application to the SoS and in addition offering to utilise up to £200,000 of future s106 monies for the use of improving the allotments.
- 3.8 Officers have agreed in principle to:
1. Invest £50,000 at other council allotments;
 2. Invest over the next 10-years + around £100,000 to £200,000 on improving other council allotments throughout the Borough - See Financial paragraph for detail
- If NSALG support the allocation to the SoS.
- 3.9 It is recognised that we do not necessarily need NSALG support for this application; however, it is Community Services and Watford Health Campus view that this support mitigates our risks and may help the future discussions with them over Farm Terrace allotments and Callowlands.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.2 An initial £50,000 investment in toilets is extra to the current investment the Council has already made to its allotments. They will essentially be self-composting bins to complement those we have on a number of our sites and have worked very well. These monies are being allocated from funds already held by the Health Campus

project and Community Services.

- 4.1.3 Future S106 contributions are pooled for Open Space contributions. We are asking that if future S106 contributions come for Open Space, that up to £200,000 is allocated to allotments. Although in our letters/communication with NSLAG we refer to S106 funding from the health campus, this funding could come from S106 generated monies for Open Space in general. There has been no time period agreed for this re-investment.

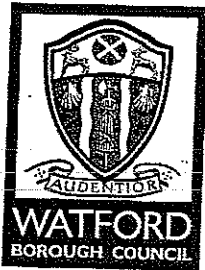
4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Property Services comments that:

1. In order to use this site for the Health Campus redevelopment it will be necessary to get the Secretary of States Consent for the land to be formally taken out of Allotment Use

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 Watford Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and as a strategic partner. In order to fulfil this commitment and its duties under the Equality Act 2010 it is important to demonstrate how policies, practices and decisions impact on people with different protected characteristics. It is also important to demonstrate that the Council is not discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of its functions
- 4.3.2 No equalities analysis of this proposal has been undertaken to date by the Borough. No preliminary public consultation has been required. However, consultation with NSALG has taken place and they are supportive of the proposal providing the legally binding undertaking is completed relating to the investment in all the other Borough Allotments.



(APPENDIX D1)

Watford Borough Council

Town Hall · Watford · Hertfordshire · WD17 3EX

Tel 01923 226400 Fax 01923 278100

DX 51529 Watford 2

Website www.watford.gov.uk Email enquiries@watford.gov.uk

Karen Kenny
National Society of Allotment and Leisure
Gardeners Ltd
197 Cauldwell Hall Road
Ipswich
IP4 5DA

enquiries to Paul Rabbitts
phone no 01923 278250
our reference
your reference
date 15th May 2012

Dear Karen

Willow Lane, Watford – abandoned allotments

Thank you for your letter received today by email. I have noted the contents within and will comment as follows.

The £50,000 investment in toilets is in addition to the current s106 investment in the council is making in our allotments. The toilets will be self composting bins to complement those we already have on a number of our sites and which have worked very well.

The £100,000 to £200,000 funding is also over and above the £50,000 we can allocate immediately and on top of the S106 funding we are currently using to improve sites.

The two sites we have improved in the borough to date have been funded by S106 funding as it becomes available. Unfortunately, we do not have an ongoing annual improvement programme and would challenge how many local authorities do actually have one in these days of austerity. Watford Borough Council continues to invest in the borough's open spaces when funding allows but, in reality, this can only be funded by s106 monies, hence the significant improvements at both Cherry Tree and Wiggenghall Allotments. We are currently developing a list for improvements elsewhere on all our sites which is currently being costed. Again, this will be funded by s106. Improvements will include signage, notice-boards, fencing improvements and extra water butts where a gap is identified.

The feedback on our draft Allotment Strategy feedback, so far, has indicated that there should be a greater emphasis on investment in allotments and we intend to feed this back into the final version which will go to the council's Cabinet for approval. With the likelihood of the above investment, we are re-visiting our draft strategy to look at how best to allocate funding and ensure it is more investment orientated. We would be willing to work closer with you/NSALG on how to improve our strategy.

We note your comments in relation to vacant plots, and covering of them.

In return for earmarking the proposed investment (£50K and a further sum of £200K) and our other undertakings, Watford Borough Council would like NSALG to confirm its support for the council's application to the Secretary of State to appropriate this abandoned allotment site (+25-years) as part of the Watford Health Campus Project. With your acceptance in outline we will prepare the appropriate draft undertaking.

As background to this matter, I think you may not have fully understood our earlier letter regarding s106 contributions. In respect of the Outline Permission for the Watford Health Campus Project, the completed s106 agreement did not seek s106 payments towards open

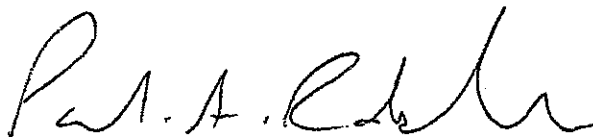


INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

space, as the open space was to be provided on-site. Consequently, this offer to invest significant sums (£150k to £250), over the next 10-years or so, in other allotment sites around the borough is a major commitment for this authority and one which we trust you agree makes reasonable sense, in the circumstances.

I hope this answers your concerns.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Rabbitts', written in a cursive style.

Paul Rabbitts
Parks and Open Spaces Section Head
Community Services

From: Karen Kenny [mailto:karen.kenny@homecall.co.uk]
Sent: 25 May 2012 11:48
To: Paul Rabbitts
Subject: RE: Abandoned allotments, Willow Lane, Watford
Importance: High

Hi Paul. This does clarify the issues and I am satisfied that the intention is there and subject to the completion and signed off undertaking I am see no reason not to support your application. I note the fact that you did not seek 106 contributions re this site however I would remind you...

"Revenue from sale or exchange of a Statutory Allotment land Section 32 Allotments and Smallholdings act 1908 requires that any revenue obtained from the sale or exchange of statutory allotment land be spent on discharging debts associated with the acquisition of allotment land, in acquiring new land for use as allotments **or on improving the existing stock of allotments**. Only the surplus may be used for other purposes."

By taking statutory allotment land out of possible allotment useage we feel that the decision to improve your stocks further to planned improvements satisfies this section of the 1908 act.

I hope this will assist with the future planning of your excellent project for the people of Watford and District.

Best regards

Karen Kenny

Eastern Region Rep NSALG Ltd.

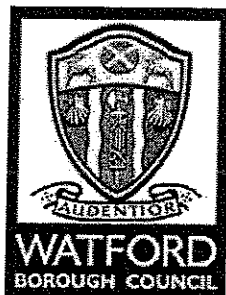
From: Paul Rabbitts [mailto:Paul.Rabbitts@watford.gov.uk]
Sent: 16 May 2012 15:14
To: 'Karen Kenny'
Cc: Eoin Hill; Tom Dobrashian
Subject: RE: Abandoned allotments, Willow Lane, Watford

Hi Karen
attached and in the post too
best wishes
Paul

Paul Rabbitts
Parks and Open Spaces Section Head
Community Services
Watford Borough Council
Town Hall, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 3EX
Phone: (01923) 278250 Fax: (01923) 278335
Mobile: 0777 0230807
email: Paul.Rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Visit the Watford Borough Council website at www.watford.gov.uk

Watford Allotments Strategy Framework and Action Plan 2012 – 2017



The Background

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 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.

However, 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.

In Watford

In 2002, Watford Borough Council drafted its first **Allotment Strategy**. At the time, the strategy stated that:-

"The Council believed that the future of allotments was secure and provided multiple benefits, not just to gardeners, but also to the environment and the wider community. The Strategy's aim was to maximise the numbers of people using allotments by promoting opportunities to all residents. It aimed to protect all allotment sites and ensure the provision of attractive, safe allotment sites with a good standard of service and infrastructure. Finally, the aim of the strategy was to protect and enhance the wildlife value of allotment sites."

The time has come to re-visit our policies on allotment provision in Watford for a number of reasons:-

- The profile of allotments nationally and locally is a much higher due to National Government initiatives and the recent Local Government Association Guidance;
- The previous strategy has achieved many of its actions and a new action plan needs to be developed;
- Changes in national Planning Policy Guidance such as PPG17, which gave open space and recreation a much higher profile and proposed typologies of open space which included allotments and community gardens;
- The increase in demand for allotments nationally and locally and growing waiting lists;
- Concerns over national and local health issues, in particular rising levels of obesity; and
- Local land development pressures.

A new strategy has therefore been developed after localised community consultation and local needs assessments. The **"Watford Allotments Strategy 2012 – 2017"** is the overarching strategy for the provision of allotments in the Borough and includes all the background information, national, regional and local policies which are relevant to allotments as well as details of the consultation carried out. This is available on the Watford Council website, www.watford.gov.uk.

However, this **"Allotments Strategy Framework and Action Plan"** has been produced as an Executive Summary to the main strategy and is the Framework for delivering the Action Plan.

Facts and Figures – the current position in Watford

There are 13 allotment sites within the Watford Borough Council boundary with only one currently self managed as an Association. A small number of allotments also exist which are managed by Network Rail.

Those directly managed by Watford Borough Council are controlled by the Community Services Division and directly by the Parks and Open Spaces Team and Service Support Team whose staff are responsible for all aspects of allotment management including:

- The administration and collection of fees and charges;
- Letting of vacant plots and liaison with allotment supervisors;
- 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.

Site	Managed/ Details	Size and Status
Garston Manor Horseshoe Lane	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 2.31ha 99 Plots Waiting List - 30
Briar Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 0.51ha 33 Plots Waiting List - 33
Cherry Tree Berry Avenue	Cherry Tree Allotment & Garden Association	Size of site – 0.93ha 51 Plots Waiting List - 15
Callowland Leggatts Way	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 6.5ha 300 Plots Waiting List - 21
Tavistock Road Radlett Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 0.33ha 16 Plots Waiting List - 20
Timberlake Radlett Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 1.52 101 Plots Waiting List - 42
Chester Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 0.32ha 21 Plots Waiting List - 8
Farm Terrace Cardiff Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 2.63ha 128 Plots Waiting List - 4
Holywell Vicarage Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 2.34ha 103 Plots Waiting List - 4
Brightwell Tolpits Lane	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 2.35ha 130 Plots Waiting List - 1
Wiggenhall Longcroft	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 0.74ha 35 Plots Waiting List - 7
Oxhey Grange Oxhey Avenue	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 2.12ha 99 Plots Waiting List - 7
Paddock Road Lower Paddock Road	Watford Borough Council	Size of site – 5.48ha 219 Plots Waiting List - 5

Figures current April 2011 (to be updated before final adoption)

As part of the process for producing the revised strategy we consulted all allotment tenants on Council and Association managed sites. When the 2002 Allotments Strategy was developed, little was known what tenants thought about the provision of allotments in the Borough and we knew little about the profile of our allotment tenants. We also knew little of what our tenants considered important in relation to allotment provision.

We know that the profile of a typical allotment gardener has changed and that more women and younger people are taking up allotment gardening. As part of the development of the updated and revised strategy, we have consulted with all our allotment tenants and the feedback is highlighted below. The overall response rate was 41% with over 400 survey forms returned.

What you told us

- Many people have had an allotment for many years. However, many have recently taken up allotment gardening only recently;
- The quality of current allotment sites ranges but overall 92% of allotment tenants rate their site as adequate to excellent and only 8% as poor to very poor;
- Only 34% felt that there was a need for more allotments in their area;
- 75% visit their allotment at least 3 times a week;
- 55% travel to their allotment by car, yet 88% of tenants are only less than 10 minutes from their site;
- On average, each visit lasts 3 to 4 hours per visit (53%);
- A vast range of crops are grown on plots, but the most popular are root vegetables and green vegetables;
- 83% of tenants compost allotment waste with 69% practising organic gardening. Many allotment tenants have assistance in tending plots (53%);
- 86% of tenants think that allotment rents are reasonable (despite recent increases in 2011);
- The average spend on an allotment by tenants varies from less than £25 to over £100 per year, but with the largest majority (41%) spending between £51 and £100 per year;
- Most have their own gardens and 57% would describe allotment gardening as their main leisure activity;
- A typical allotment tenant may be male (57%) or female (43%), but 95% are white British. 16% have a disability of some kind. However, the age range is now very diverse with 34% aged between 35 and 54 years old and 34% older than 65 years; and
- Uncultivated plots left by existing tenants, the length of time to let uncultivated plots and waiting lists were your biggest issues!

What else do we know about our allotments?

In 2005 Watford commissioned consultants to carry out an open spaces needs assessment based on Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) principles. They told us that there were allotment accessibility deficiencies in the following wards:-

- Nascot (part of);
- Tudor;
- Park;
- Woodside (part of);
- Meriden (part of);
- Central (part of); and
- Callowland.

There are 13 sites in Watford totalling just over 28 hectares. This is equal to 0.34ha per 1000 people (3.4m² per person). There is good access to allotments in the north and south of the borough but little access from the central strip.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on 2 people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.125 hectares per 1000 population (1.25m² per person) based on an average plot size of 250m².

Based on the current provision Watford is well over the NSALG standard, however as stated, the majority of allotments are in the north and south of the borough with little provision in the central area.

Overall quality of sites is also reasonable and as determined by the 2011 survey, satisfaction rates are very high for individual sites.

In the past few years, there has been a significant improvement in the allotment service, which is reflected in the growing occupancy rates (66% in 2002, 89% in 2006 and 91% in 2011) and a satisfaction level of 73% in 2002, which has risen to 92% in 2011.

The present information shows that all the allotment sites in Watford are very popular with relatively high occupancy levels (several being at full capacity with waiting lists). We now have detailed local data available which shows there are increasing numbers of women and younger people from wider social and economic backgrounds starting to take allotment plots but 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 (which has increased locally), heart disease and the need to take more exercise, there is also the opportunity for allotments to tackle psychological issues such as stress. At the same time there are a small number of sites with some vacant plots which could be promoted locally.

Allotments also provide valuable wildlife habitats that make a major contribution to maintaining Watford's biodiversity, even when fully operational as productive allotments. This is of considerable importance as many parts of Watford are densely developed and many houses have small gardens, or no gardens at all. Allotments are therefore important "green lungs" for the town and the Council aims to ensure sites are managed with local biodiversity protected and where possible, enhanced.

So what else can we do to improve the service?

Discussions with tenants and allotment supervisors have also revealed a number of improvements that could be made.

- The role of allotment supervisors clarified and strengthened;
- Two meetings per year of allotment supervisors for North and South (including representatives of the 2 allotment societies for West and North Watford), attended by Parks Development Officer for each area as well as an AGM for all Allotment Supervisors, Allotment Societies and tenants;
- Parks Development officers (North and South) re-designated to include and strengthen role of managing allotments for their respective areas;
- Points of contact defined within Service Support Team for tenants / allotment supervisors and link to Parks Development Officers – exact roles to be clarified;
- Benefits of self management to be promoted; and
- Development of an allotments charter.

The role of Allotment Supervisors

In April 2011, a session was held with most of the allotment supervisors to discuss a range of issues and in particular to look to the future and how best to provide an efficient and effective allotment service. In particular, the role of the supervisor and how communications could be improved was highlighted. The findings are summarised below:-

Role of Supervisor

- Link between the Council and allotment tenants;
- First point of contact for all allotment tenants;
- Problem solving;
- Monitoring of compliance with tenancy agreements;
- Support for new tenants; and
- Producing reports to Council during growing season.

Communications

- Feedback to supervisors needs to be improved especially when related to problems;
- Reports from supervisors need to be regular during growing season;
- Point of contacts at Council need to be clarified – single point of contact?
- Feedback required especially related to non-cultivation plots and notifications
- Notice-boards on each site; and
- Tenants contact details available of all tenants for each site made available to site supervisors. 44% of tenants do not know who their allotment supervisor is.

Self Management Process

The strategy advocates the devolution of management responsibilities to allotment associations wherever there is the capacity and enthusiasm to do so. Local Authorities are also been encouraged to provide ongoing support to associations. Allotment associations are often much better placed to keep a close eye on cultivation standards and to intervene before a problem gets out of hand. Allotment associations are often generally responsible for some of the more popular sites.

As part of the 2011 consultation process, one of the questions asked was whether allotment holders were interested in self management or setting up an allotments association.

The Council aims to work closely with allotment supervisors and tenants with sites that have indicated some interest in self management based on the model used as part of the management devolution for Cherry Tree Allotments. Responses to the survey were low. However it was felt that if there was a greater understanding of the self management process, some sites may be keener. This will be investigated at a later stage.

Legal stuff - the do's and don'ts of allotments

Watford Borough Council currently has a Code of Practice in relation to the administration of allotments, last amended in March 2011. The "Frequently Asked Questions" details the procedures involved regarding the administration of allotments for the sites we are responsible for and the "do's and don'ts" and what is expected. They are simple and succinct and are regularly updated. It covers specifically:-

- Rents;
- Concessions;
- General site rules;
- Termination procedures; and
- Contact Information.

However, consideration will be given to developing an Allotments Charter, which would describe rules, "Frequently asked Questions", expectations, objectives and activities and highlight what is expected of the Council, allotment supervisors and tenants.

The allotment charter would describe our objectives, assets, activities and regulations. We are committed to progressively improving the condition of our allotments.

Our Objectives

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

So where does the money come from?

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 despite recent increases in 2011 but need to be affordable by the local community. In some cases ploholders may be willing to pay for better facilities, standards of maintenance and promotion. With this in mind, Watford has developed a 2 level standard of maintenance – **STANDARD** and **ENHANCED**. As Watford have opted for a 2 level standard of maintenance for allotments based on **STANDARD** and **ENHANCED** status this is reflected by the level of rent charged, the standards are therefore defined below.

STANDARD SITE

- Incremental rent rises;
- Vacant plots will not be covered and cultivated;
- The Council will cut any communal grass areas and vacant plots once a year;
- The Council will cut hedges when deemed necessary by a Council officer;
- No skips will be supplied;
- The Council will pay for water used on the site;
- The Council will only do patch repairs to existing fencing;
- The Council will not maintain the toilet (where present) and when it comes to the end of its natural life, the toilet will be removed;
- The Council will not clear plots if the existing plot holder gives up or his tenancy is terminated; and
- The Council will keep the site to the standard outlined above.

ENHANCED SITE

- Incremental rent rises;
- The Council will keep vacant plots covered and cultivated for new plot holders;
- The Council will cut any communal grass areas up to three times a year;
- The Council will cut hedges once a year or as necessary;
- The Council will supply skips if necessary once a year;
- The Council will pay for water used on the site;
- The Council will repair the fence or replace damaged fence panels when required;
- The Council will carry out repairs to the toilet, hand wash and toilet rolls to be supplied by plot holders;
- The Council will clear, cultivate and cover a plot if the existing plot holder gives up or his tenancy is terminated; and
- The Council will keep this site to the standard as outlined above.

Rent concessions are permitted by allotment law and are granted by Watford Borough Council to the following tenants:-

- Housing Benefit, in the form of Rent Allowance or Local Housing Allowance for people living in rented accommodation;
- Council Tax Benefit;
- Income Support;
- Job Seekers Allowance (income based);
- Working Tax Credit and /or Child Tax Credit;
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (not 'Savings Pension Credit'); and
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income based).

There are also pots of external funding that are also available. Past experience suggests locally and nationally that the most successful allotment 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.

So what are we going to do over the next 5 years?

We have listened to what tenants, plot holders and site supervisors have told us and looked at what we can realistically achieve over the next 5 years. We have therefore proposed a 5 year **ACTION PLAN** and help us achieve our aim which is:-

*"To maintain and where appropriate, improve the quality, management and promotion of **all** Watford Borough Council allotment sites, and to offer access to this unique leisure activity to **all** members of the community".*

Integral to this framework and action plan 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.

Key Theme 1: To ensure sufficient stock of allotments at the recommended quantity and quality standard and to meet the present and future needs of Watford's community.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
1.1	To regularly monitor the level of occupancy and the level of cultivation at all allotment sites in Watford and does not fall below 90%, and ensure vacant plots are re-let within 4 weeks where a waiting list exists.	PDO SST SS	Monitor monthly and ongoing S,M,L
1.2	To increase allotment provision to reflect the longer term minimum shortfall in supply across Watford by looking at the increased provision of smaller plots as they become available.	PDO SST	Ongoing S,M,L
1.3	To work with landowners and schools in identifying sites for future provision.	PSH Planning	M,L
1.4	To agree the allotment provision of 0.125ha per 1000 population based on the recent PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment and ensure this is reflected within the LDF.	Planning	S
1.5	To re-assess the procedures for leisure provision from Section 106 agreements to ensure that contributions can be provided from Developers contributions.	Planning	M
1.6	To ensure the proper procedures have been pursued in the event of any allotment sites becoming surplus to requirements.	PDO Planning Legal	L
1.7	To work towards all allotment sites meeting the recommended standard or enhanced standards	PDO	Ongoing S,M,L
1.8	To regularly review the options in relation to standard or enhanced status for each site.	PDO	Annually

Key Theme 2: To ensure the benefits of allotment gardening are promoted to all sections of the Watford community.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
2.1	The production of a newsletter and regular updating of the website with links to appropriate allotment and gardening sites.	SS	S
2.2	To provide notice and sign boards on each allotment site, whether standard or enhanced , detailing ownership as well as contact details and how to rent a plot.	PDO	S
2.3	Local promotional campaigns advertising the benefits of allotments focused on Doctors surgeries, libraries, community centres, leisure centres and health food shops where there are plots vacant. Develop an allotments poster.	PDO SST	S
2.4	Re-Develop the council website or have a web page on the WBC website dedicated to allotment gardening linked to complimentary sites such as the ARI, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.	SST	S
2.5	To develop partnerships with organisations such as the PCT, community groups, local schools, Herts County Council, Schools, WCHT, BME and Youth Groups to broaden the appeal of allotment gardening.	PDO	M,L
2.6	To work with Allotment Supervisors to offer advice sessions and "allotment fairs" to encourage new gardeners and to look at "taster" days on sites with vacancies.	AS	M,L
2.7	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 and individuals with disabilities.	PDO SS	S,M,L
2.8	To re-assess the role of site supervisors on WBC run sites to ensure that the allotment is being run properly and all tenants needs are being met. To ensure monthly reports are submitted from Supervisors.	PDO	S,M,L
2.9	To encourage horticultural competitions on WBC sites.	AS	M
2.10	To re-assess mechanisms for effectively communicating between WBC officers, allotment supervisors and gardeners on all the WBC sites, including development of a newsletter	PDO SS SST	M
2.11	To ensure a pricing Policy is in place which does not discourage the economically disadvantaged from renting plots.	PDO	L
2.12	To promote school use of sites & options available & support Healthy Schools Program	PDO	M,L

Key Theme 3: To ensure allotments in Watford are managed and administered in the most effective and efficient way.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
3.1	To approach Allotment holders on the existing Council run sites to ascertain whether forming an Allotment Association or Self Management is desirable in 2013/14.	PDO	L
3.2	To encourage existing Allotment Associations to actively continue to manage their sites.	PDO	S,M,L
3.3	To have a formal procedure to annually review the administration of its allotment stock managed by Associations and WBC. This should include: occupancy levels, cultivation levels, waiting lists and a financial statement for the previous 12 months. To be reported at AGM	PDO	L
3.4	To ensure that all sites encourage high levels of cultivation and have follow policy and procedures for dealing with gardeners who rent plots but do not cultivate them.	PDO SS	S,M,L
3.5	To review allotment charges annually in comparison with similar provision elsewhere.	PDO SST	L
3.6	To consider the opportunities of external funding working with Associations and supervisors as necessary.	PDO	S,M,L
3.7	To manage north and south supervisors meetings and an AGM covering all sites in Watford.	PDO	S,M,L
3.8	To review the allotment tenancy agreement annually and update accordingly	PDO SST	L
3.9	To continue to support the role of the site supervisor and respond to their monthly reports within 14 days.	PDO	S
3.10	To develop an allotments charter and update the Frequently Asked Questions as required	PDO SST	S,M,L
3.11	To re-assess the system for keys and security locks and move to a single key system.	PDO SST	S
3.12	To develop a policy on animal welfare to ensure animals are kept on Watford Council allotments in line with RSPCA animal welfare guidance.	PDO	S
3.13	To manage and protect local biodiversity on sites and enhance where possible	PDO	S, M, L

Key Theme 4: To ensure that resources match the needs of the service.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
4.1	The Council to review every 2 years the process and principles by which the rent charges are arrived at by benchmarking with neighbouring authorities and within the Borough itself	PDO	L
4.2	To maximise grant opportunities as and when they arise	PDO	S,M,L

PDO = Parks Development Officer

SST= Service Support Team

SS = Site Supervisors

PSH = Parks Section Head

AS = Allotment Societies

S – Short Term (12-18 months)

M – Medium Term (18-36 months)

L – Long Term (36 months +)

How will we know how we are doing?

It is important however that the strategy and framework are monitored and evaluated and that a series of evaluation techniques are implemented. Part of this relates to the need to set up an internal monitoring mechanism and clarification of roles and responsibilities. This needs to be simple yet effective. Roles have therefore been clarified and it is intended to hold 2 meetings per year with all Site Supervisors and an AGM, where the Action Plans can be monitored accordingly and fed back into any revised Action Plans.

Want to know more?

You can find out more about allotments in Watford? Please contact:-

Write to:

Community Services

Watford Borough Council

Hempstead Road

Town Hall

Watford

Hertfordshire

WD17 3EX

Telephone: 01923 278333

Email: community@watford.gov.uk

However, given the ever increasing demand for allotments and stakeholders concerns regarding the disposal of allotments (especially those where the local authority is claiming such provision is not necessary or impracticable), I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of ensuring that local authorities provide robust evidence supporting claims for disposals and that GOWM's scrutiny of applications for consent to dispose and claims that replacement sites are neither necessary or practicable remains absolutely essential, particularly given current levels of demand for allotment plots.

In addition, in cases where local authorities have indicated that adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders, GOWM should continue to ensure that they are fully satisfied that the local authority has taken all the necessary steps to find and secure suitable replacement sites before consent for disposal is granted. Of course, GOWM need to continue making their judgements on disposal cases in accordance with the law and on a case by case basis.

Finally I would also like to take this opportunity to thank GOWM colleagues for their continued hard work and dedication since 2008 in taking forward responsibility for allotment consent for disposal cases for all GO regions. We are keen to ensure that we support you in delivering this important function, so if we can be of any assistance then please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'HT', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Henry Tam
Deputy Director
Community Empowerment - Delivery



Local Authority Chief Executives - England

Peter Matthew
Urban Environmental Regeneration
Urban Policy Division
Department for Transport,
Local Government and the Regions
4/G6 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Phone: 020 7944 3000
Web Site: www.dtlr.gov.uk
Our Ref: 10/01/07

27 February 2002

Dear Chief Executive

Allotments Act 1925: Section 8 Consents - Assessment Criteria

As you know, the Government is committed to ensuring adequate protection is afforded to allotments. The *Allotments Act 1925* requires that statutory allotment land only be disposed of with the Secretary of State's consent.

Last year the Department consulted on *draft Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 17: Sport, Open Space and Recreation*, which proposed amendments to the criteria against which applications for consent to dispose of statutory allotments are to be determined. The revised criteria, with changes in **bold**, are that:

- **the allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirement;**
- adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders, or that such provision is not necessary or is impracticable;
- the number of people on the waiting list has been effectively taken into account;
- the authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and has consulted the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners; and
- **the implications of disposal for other relevant policies, in particular development plan policies, have been taken into account.**

The revised criteria will take effect from 1 April 2002. Revised guidance on the handling of applications has been issued to the Government Offices for the Regions.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that relevant staff are informed of the revised criteria. These changes will help to provide better protection for allotments and will help to ensure that allotments which are necessary are not disposed of and that the future demand for allotments can be met.

Yours sincerely

Peter Matthew



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE