



ALLOTMENT STRATEGY 2019



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Adopted by Desford Parish Council on 18th December 2019

1. Introduction

Desford Parish Council has produced this allotment strategy with the aim to provide strategic guidelines for the management, administration, promotion, development and funding of allotments in Desford. It aims to raise the profile of allotments and to optimise their use for existing and potential tenants, suiting the needs of all sections of the community.

The strategy examines the way forward for the Council's allotments over the next five years. It identifies a number of prime objectives, describes the background and issues relevant to the provision of allotments and outlines appropriate courses of action and further developments to improve the allotment site.

Desford Parish Council aim to work in partnership with Desford Allotment Gardens Association (DAGA) on the shared management of the allotment site

2. Legislation

Desford Parish Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments and recognises them as an important asset. There is a complex network of legislation relating to allotment administration, which is governed by statute and case law. The legal framework that has developed since 1908 has established a model for the administrative process. It is essential that the Council is aware of its duties. These will be reflected in the development proposals and action plan contained within the strategy.

The legislation which directly affects allotment administration and the development constraints on this strategy are contained within the following statutes:

The Small Holdings & Allotments Act 1908: This consolidated all previous allotment legislation. It repeats the duty of local authorities to provide allotments.

Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1919: This legislation amended the 1908 Act.

The Allotment Act 1922: The act provides tenants with a measure of security of tenure. This act has since been amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

Allotment Act 1925: Requires town-planning authorities to give special consideration to allotments when preparing their town planning and as a consequence is relevant to the Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

Small Holding and Allotment Act 1926: Made a number of improvements to the law mostly concerning smallholdings.

Agricultural Land (Utilisation) Act 1931: This was passed at a time of economic depression and has little impact today.

Allotment Act 1950: Strengthened the requirements on Councils to provide allotment gardens. Provisions relating to rents were also affected. This Act included issues relating to notices to quit and compensation.

Town and Country Planning Act 1971 & Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: Have considerable influence on the forward planning of allotments and are relevant to the Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

The Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980 and the Local Government & Planning (Amendment) Act 1981: Consolidated planning legislation, which has further influenced the forward planning of authorities.

The various acts are collectively known as the 'Allotment Acts' and will be referred to as such in this strategy. Statutory sites are directly protected by the Allotment Acts but temporary sites are not.

3. National Context

Allotment gardening is a pursuit that provides wide-ranging benefits to the local community and the environment and can make a positive change to the quality of people's lives. In addition to the advantages of producing good quality, local, low cost, fresh food, gardeners gain the benefits of healthy exercise that is active, socially inclusive and reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being. Allotments are available to all sections of the community including the old, young, disabled and people from ethnic communities. Allotments are a unique and valuable aspect of the local area, contributing to the quality of the environment and the range of local leisure provision. They also provide opportunities for wildlife. The Local Government Commission commissioned a major study on allotment management, entitled "*Growing in the Community: a good practice guide for the management of allotments*". It was based upon extensive research into current good practice, innovation and successful ideas implemented by Local Authorities across England and Wales.

This strategy is in keeping with the examples of best practice given in the above document

4. Desford Allotments

Background

Desford Parish Council administers the Hunts Lane allotment site, which currently contains 65 plots, some of which are divided into half plots. (See plan in Appendix 1.) In future it could provide plots for the disabled and community. The national allotment survey in 1996 showed an average provision in England by county, of 15 plots per 1000 households. Based on the 2011 census, Desford has a provision of approximately -16 plots per 1000 households. There is no recognised quantitative standard for allotment provision.

Allotments are measured in rods, an old Anglo-Saxon measurement so called because it was the length of the rod used to control a team of eight oxen. A full plot is approximately 10 rods or 125m² in size. A half plot is approximately 5 rods or 62.5m² in size.

Register of Tenants / Waiting Lists

The Parish Council keeps a register of tenants and a waiting list of residents who have expressed a wish to be allocated a plot. All new tenants are required to sign a tenancy agreement.

The waiting list is maintained on a first come, first allocated basis.

Allotment Administration

The Allotments Working Group, with support from the Parish Clerk, manages Desford's allotments.

There is a procedure in place to inspect plots, to ensure conformance with the tenancy agreement. Enforcement can involve a process of serving a warning notice, followed by a notice to quit for noncompliance. (See Appendix 2)

Finance

The annual rental for an allotment plot must be paid in advance for the twelve month period beginning the 1st January each year. Half the full rental amount is charged for a half-plot.

Promoting the Allotments

Allotment site information and the application procedure is available to view on Desford Parish Council's web site at www.desfordparishcouncil.co.uk

Desford Allotment Gardens Association (DAGA) organise a Produce Show each year in September.

DAGA

The majority of allotment tenants are members of Desford Allotment Gardens Association. The Council supports and encourages tenants to participate in the association in order to be covered by their personal liability insurance. The society is affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) Ltd. This is Britain's largest body concerned with the management of allotments. DAGA officers attend meetings of the East Midlands Region of the NSALG. They occasionally seek the advice of the NSALG in allotment management issues.

5. Aims and Objectives

The aims are:

- To maintain and improve the infrastructure, facilities and quality of the allotment site, ensuring it is welcoming and accessible to all.
- To have a safe and secure allotment site.
- To continue to implement an effective management and administration process.
- To improve customer satisfaction and increase tenant participation in the management of the site.
- To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community, realising the opportunity they offer for education and lifelong learning and to increase social inclusion initiatives.
- To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation.
- To promote the benefits of working on an allotment in terms of improving health

- To review the existing provision of allotments and if necessary to identify areas of potential future allotment provision.

Aim 1: To maintain and improve the infrastructure, facilities and quality of the allotment site, ensuring it is welcoming and accessible to all

It is recognised that the principal factors influencing people considering an allotment are quality, security, accessibility and affordability.

The infrastructure of an allotment site is very important to its tenants, in particular security against theft and vandalism.

It is important for the Council to establish an agreed quality standard for the allotment site, in consultation with appropriate partners, and aim to achieve and sustain this standard at all times. It should seek to ensure good access, good security, good facilities, good paths, adequate water provision and prompt attention to neglected plots. It could be based on the Civic Trust's Green Flag Award Scheme assessment criteria. (Some allotment sites have achieved the Green Pennant, which recognises high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups.)

A thorough survey of the allotment site can ascertain the level of current provision and allow recommendation of any improvements that may be necessary to raise the site to the required standard. From this survey a programme of improvements can be prepared.

It is important to investigate ways of securing finance to ensure the continual improvement of the allotments. This will involve exploring new and creative ways of generating additional funding, by way of local and national grants.

A detailed improvement plan should be drawn up, in partnership with DAGA. This plan will provide all tenants with the opportunity to be consulted and comment on the schedule of improvements proposed for the site.

A review of scheduled grounds maintenance operations needs to be carried out to ensure that best value is being achieved.

Actions:

1.1 Agree a quality standard for the site

1.2 Carry out a site survey

1.3 Investigate potential funding sources

1.4 Produce an improvement plan

1.5 Review scheduled grounds maintenance

Aim 2: To have a safe and secure allotment site

A Security Audit will be carried out annually and the results will be incorporated into the annual review of the Allotment Strategy.

An active and well-tenanted site deters intruders. We aim to foster a strong community, encouraging tenants to "watch out" for each other and for the site.

Consideration may be given to joining the Countryside Watch scheme. The Council will actively liaise with and involve the Police in safeguarding the site.

The Council will seek to promote best practice in health and safety on the allotment site. A system will be set up to enable annual site safety inspections to be carried out. This will be carried out by the Allotment Working Group, with an assessment checklist to be completed. The inspection is intended to identify defects that present a safety problem to allotment users and visitors.

Actions:

2.1 Carry out a security audit

2.2 Investigate the possibility of joining a Countryside Watch scheme

2.3 Set up a system for an annual site safety inspection

Aim 3: To continue to implement an effective management and administration process

The Council will ensure the effective management and administration of the allotment site by continuing to develop a strong partnership with DAGA and individual tenants. It is also important to develop links with other local agencies, which might have an interest in promoting allotment use, such as the local Medical Practices and Adult Social Services.

To ensure that a high quality service is provided, all administration and management procedures will be reviewed annually.

The Council will annually review the Tenancy Agreement and Allotment Rules. The Council will continue to promote allotments and monitor vacancies with the aim to keep the site fully tenanted.

Actions:

3.1 Review administration and management procedures

3.2 Review tenancy agreement & rules

Aim 4: To improve customer satisfaction and increase tenant participation in the management of the site

It is important to have effective communication and consultation with both DAGA and individual plot holders. Tenants are encouraged to participate in the association, which holds regular meetings to discuss relevant allotment issues. A councillor will continue to attend these meetings. Further information can be found at www.desfordparishcouncil.co.uk

The Allotment Working Group provides a communication link with tenants, showing plots to interested prospective tenants and notifying the Parish Council of any site problems. They are expected to apply the tenancy conditions fairly, in the interests of all.

The Future of Allotments published by the Select Committee, recognises that delegated self-management reduces the administrative burden on the Parish Clerk. It can also bring more responsive management on a day-to-day basis, a sense of pride in any improvements to the site and opportunities for volunteers to bring their own skills and expertise to a new challenge. The Allotment Working Group currently covers much of the administrative work, but all financial matters are decided by full Council.

The Council will introduce an exit survey to identify the reasons for tenants leaving.

Actions:

4.1 Improve the allotment information on the DPC web site

4.2 Introduce an exit survey

Aim 5: To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community, realising the opportunity they offer for education and lifelong learning and to increase social inclusion initiatives

It has long been recognised that there is something special about allotment communities. Within the setting of the allotment site age, gender, race, social status and occupation have little relevance.

The Council will continue to seek innovative ways of promoting and advertising allotments. The Council will use leaflets and posters, ensuring these are displayed for maximum effect, in public places such as the library, doctors' surgeries, village halls, church centre and parish notice boards and also by developing the allotment page on the Council's website.

DAGA have provided a notice board on the allotment site to promote better communication with tenants.

Allotments can play a valuable role in environmental education and we would like to develop closer links with Bosworth Academy, who have created an allotment on their campus. The National Curriculum provides scope for pupils to study plant growth, urban land use, composting, recycling, soils, organic gardening and local sustainable development, all of which can be taught effectively outside the classroom on an allotment.

The Council will continue to offer half plots as well as full plots and publicise this option.

In recent years interest has been shown by some allotment sites and community groups in having communal gardens where everyone works together for their mutual benefit. Desford in Bloom have a plot for this purpose.

It is important to widen the appeal of allotment sites for vulnerable sections of the community and to increase accessibility. This could include making the sites more

physically accessible with wider paths and raised beds. This aspect of allotment development needs further research.

Actions:

5.1 Actively promote the allotments as necessary by means of leaflets, posters and the website

5.2 Ensure that information on the site notice board is up to date

Aim 6: To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation

By growing their own food, allotment gardeners already make a contribution to local food production and the reduction of 'food miles' and this benefit could be enhanced through the distribution of surplus crops within the local community. The adoption of organic methods provides the further benefit of production that is sustainable from an ecological standpoint.

Allotments make a positive contribution to the local environment. The plots and hedges provide a valuable habitat for many species of animals, birds and invertebrates. To some degree they also safeguard other flora and fauna, especially given that access is restricted. The Sustainable Development Office estimates that allotments have an average of up to 30% higher species diversity than a private domestic garden. There is potential for the better management of the natural features of allotments, creating improved habitats and a richer source of local biodiversity. Even in their choice of crops, allotment gardeners make a contribution to biodiversity. In some instances tenants can help keep alive strains of fruit and vegetable varieties, which are no longer available through commercial channels.

The Council will seek opportunities to improve and sustain the biodiversity of the allotment site and at the same time support and assist DAGA with funding bids for biodiversity projects.

Organic gardening practice, which avoids the use of pesticides, artificial fertilisers and peat, is also helpful in maximising biodiversity value and preventing indirect negative environmental effects. An increasing number of tenants are beginning to grow their food organically and this move needs to be encouraged. Further information can be found in Natural England's leaflet *Wildlife on Allotments* available to download from www.naturalengland.org.uk

In these days of 'food miles' – the average item of food consumed in the EU has travelled over 4,000 km from origin to kitchen table. Food that has travelled from just down the road can therefore make a significant contribution to local sustainability. The opportunity to share with others the fruits (and vegetables) of one's labour is an intrinsic part of the culture of allotments.

Most allotment tenants are committed to recycling materials, self-sufficiency and environmental competence by the very nature of what they do. Allotments are the

heart of living a sustainable lifestyle and support the environment in many ways. The Council will encourage recycling methods and composting initiatives where possible and consider the possibility of providing a skip for non-recyclable items from time to time.

Actions:

6.1 Review the problems caused by non-recyclable material and the provision of a skip from time to time

6.2 Investigate composting initiatives

Aim 7: To promote the benefits of working on an allotment in terms of improving health

The value of allotment gardening in terms of public health was identified in the Select Committee report *The Future of Allotments*. This report highlighted the therapeutic value of allotments to people with physical and mental health problems. The report strongly recommends that allotments are explicitly included in national public health strategies and are integrated into local delivery. The Health Education Council recommends gardening as a good form of exercise, especially for older age groups who are less likely to participate in active sports.

The Council will seek to provide all people with the opportunity to use allotments as a means of developing a healthy lifestyle and will work with partner organisations to investigate the Green Gym and similar initiatives, which offer people the opportunity to 'work out' and exercise in the fresh air through gardening activities. There could also be a referral scheme through doctors' surgeries to advise suitable patients to take up an allotment. Links will need to be established with local surgeries to develop this programme.

Actions:

7.1 Investigate the Green Gym and any similar initiatives

7.2 Establish links with local surgeries

Aim 8: To review the existing provision of allotments and if necessary identify areas of potential future allotment provision

The best safeguard for an allotment site is for the plots to be fully tenanted and well looked after, with the site delivering the full range of benefits to be derived from allotment gardening to the local community.

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide allotments as determined by section 23 of the Smallholding & Allotments Act 1908. The Council recognises its responsibilities under the Act. National planning policy set out in *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (PPG17, July 2002) makes specific reference to allotments, including details on the protection of sites. Allotment sites are also subject to an additional measure of

protection as previously undeveloped land, which has the lowest priority for new development.

The Council is undertaking a full audit of open space and recreation provision, including allotments, as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The review of allotment provision will need to include an assessment of both current needs and latent demand.

Actions:

8.1 Review current allotment provision and identify any future need

6. Monitoring and Review

This Strategy is a live document that will form the basis of Desford Parish Council's priorities for allotments over the coming years. It will be subject to annual monitoring and review, adjusting to suit the changing circumstances and needs that develop over time.

In recent years various improvements have been made to the allotments. However, there is still potential for their development. The key to success is to implement the Action Plan through partnership and sharing a vision for the future.

Appendices

1. Allotment Plan
2. Allotment Rules and Inspection Policy