

## **10. Allotments**

### **Introduction and definition**

- 10.1. The primary purpose of allotments is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. This type of open space may also include urban farms.
- 10.2. As well as enabling people to grow their own produce, allotments provide a number of wider benefits to the community including:
  - bringing together different cultural backgrounds
  - improving physical and mental health
  - providing a source of recreation
  - making a wider contribution to the green and open space network.
- 10.3. Allotments are becoming increasingly popular nationally, following the recognition of the role that they can play in encouraging all sectors of the community to participate in active recreation. Increased emphasis on home grown food across the media has also been attributed to increased demand for allotments. The rising focus on physical activity and health has also contributed to the increase in use of allotments, with such activities providing an alternative option to participation in formal sport, particularly for older residents.
- 10.4. Changing trends in house building, with an increasing focus on flats and apartments may also generate an upturn in the demand for allotments, as residents without access to private gardens seek opportunities to regularly access areas of open spaces for recreational purposes.
- 10.5. Mirroring the national trend, demand for allotments in Manchester has significantly increased in recent years and many sites are now oversubscribed. The varying characteristics of Manchester, including both the population profile and type of housing means that demand varies across the City.
- 10.6. The role of allotments in increasing biodiversity is also recognised, both by local residents, key stakeholders and in several regional and local strategies.
- 10.7. This section considers the provision of allotments across Manchester, views on the adequacy of current provision and highlights future opportunities for the delivery of allotments.

### **Consultation**

- 10.8. Views on the provision of allotments were explored through a variety of different consultation methods. General issues arising in relation to allotments include:
  - 9% of respondents to the household survey use allotments at least once a week. Despite this, allotments are one of the less frequently used types of open space
  - awareness, lack of information and access issues were highlighted as being some of the key barriers to the increased usage of allotments

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- attendees at workshops highlighted the role that localised allotment provision plays in family life and the social life of individuals and emphasised that the value of allotments extends far further than the ability to grow produce. Attendees at workshop sessions felt that more should be done to make allotments accessible to younger generations, including encouraging schools to incorporate allotment visits for learning and exercise.

### Current Provision

- 10.9. There are 40 allotment sites across Manchester, all of which are owned and coordinated by Manchester Leisure.
- 10.10. The majority of sites are managed by societies who oversee the day to day running of their site. The Association of Manchester Allotment Societies (AMAS) was constituted in 1993. It acts as a means of support to the City's local allotment and horticultural societies. AMAS is a district federation of the National Society of Allotment Gardeners. Allotment societies liaise with the allotments officer at Manchester City Council.
- 10.11. Allotments are available to all residents, and discounts are granted to those receiving a pension and those who are disabled, chronically sick or unemployed.
- 10.12. The existing allotment sites contain a total of 2285 plots. The largest allotment site is Levenshulme, which contains 228 plots. Aquarius Estate in Hulme is the smallest, containing only four plots.
- 10.13. The amount of land dedicated to allotments across the City is summarised in Table 10.1 below. The number of plots relates to the number of plots that were tendered at the time of data collection.

**Table 10.1 – Provision of allotments across Manchester**

Area	Current provision (hectares)	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares and plots)	Largest site (hectares and plots)	Provision per 1000 population
City Centre	0	0	n/a	n/a	0.00
East	20.17	7			0.28
Central	1.918	4	0.05 (4 plots)	1.57ha (79 plots)	0.03
South	20.12	15	0.16 (10 plots)	3.42 (119 plots)	0.15
North	8.98	7	0.43(31 plots)	2.9 (62 plots)	0.10
Wythenshawe	8.21	7	0.61 (23 plots)	2.25 (108 plots)	0.12
<b>Overall</b>	<b>59.40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0.05 (4 plots)</b>	<b>3.42 (119 plots)</b>	<b>0.13</b>

- 10.14. As highlighted above, several issues arise from the analysis of the quantity of allotments across the City, specifically:

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- there are no allotments located in the City Centre area, although recent developments mean that there is a concentration of high density housing in this area of the City
- the quantity of provision per 1000 population is consistent in the North, Wythenshawe and Southern areas, however provision is significantly higher in the eastern areas of the City
- the overriding theme of consultations was a perceived lack of allotments Citywide. Over half (55%) of residents indicated that the quantity of allotments was insufficient. Surprisingly, the highest levels of dissatisfaction were located in the East of the City, where the highest levels of provision can be found
- provision in the central area is lower than in other areas, both in terms of the number of plots available and also the amount of space dedicated to allotment provision. This issue was raised during workshop and drop in sessions, with residents in particular highlighting that there is limited access to allotments in the City Centre and central area. The local characteristics of these areas were perceived to exacerbate this issue

10.15. In light of the demand led nature of allotment provision, it is important to evaluate waiting lists as well as understand the distribution of existing facilities. Consultation with AMAS indicated that large waiting lists were inhibiting further participation, not just in terms of limiting the number of people who were able to access allotments, but also by deterring new potential users from getting involved.

10.16. Table 10.2 summarises the waiting lists in each area.

**Table 10.2 – Waiting Lists for allotments across the City**

Area	Total number of plots	Total Waiting Lists	Total demand in relation to supply (%)	Comments
City Centre				No allotment provision
East	588	33	5.61	Ryder Brow allotments has 20 plots available subject to infrastructure works
Central	106	61	57.55	
South	925	450	48.65	Some plots for immediate rent (Bethnal Drive 2, Brailsford Rd 1). 40 plots available at Southern allotments subject to infrastructure works
North	286	35	12.246	Frenchbarn, Broadhurst and Pleasant Street have plots available subject to infrastructure work (22, 5 and 15 respectively). Hazeldene Road and Frenchbarn plots available for immediate rent (2 and 9).
Wythenshawe	380	53	13.95	Brooklands Allotments has 15 plots for immediate rent

Area	Total number of plots	Total Waiting Lists	Total demand in relation to supply (%)	Comments
<b>Overall</b>	<b>22,85</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>27.65</b>	<b>89 plots available for immediate rent. 102 plots available subject to infrastructure improvements</b>

10.17. As table 10.2 illustrates, the highest waiting lists are located in areas where the supply of allotments is highest. This serves to highlight the demand led nature of allotments

10.18. Although there are existing waiting lists, over 100 additional plots will soon be available which will further reduce the waiting lists in the City

### **Quality**

10.19. The quality of existing allotments in the City was assessed through site visits. Key issues arising from site visits included:

- the general quality of allotments in the City is average, with the average quality score of a site being 76%
- 33% of sites achieved quality scores within the bottom quartile level (68% and below), highlighting the need for qualitative improvements to a significant number of allotments
- the quality of allotments is consistent across the City, with the exception of North Manchester where the quality of allotments is higher, with the average quality score of a site being 87%.

10.20. Since the site visits took place, significant improvements have been carried out to the quality of allotments to maximise the number of plots available on the site and improve the infrastructure of allotments in Manchester. In the past year 95 plots have been refurbished. These refurbishments have carried out in partnership with residents, AMAS and Members.

10.21. The household survey demonstrated that 40% of respondents to the household survey perceive the quality of allotments to be poor, with dissatisfaction in the East of the City being particularly high.

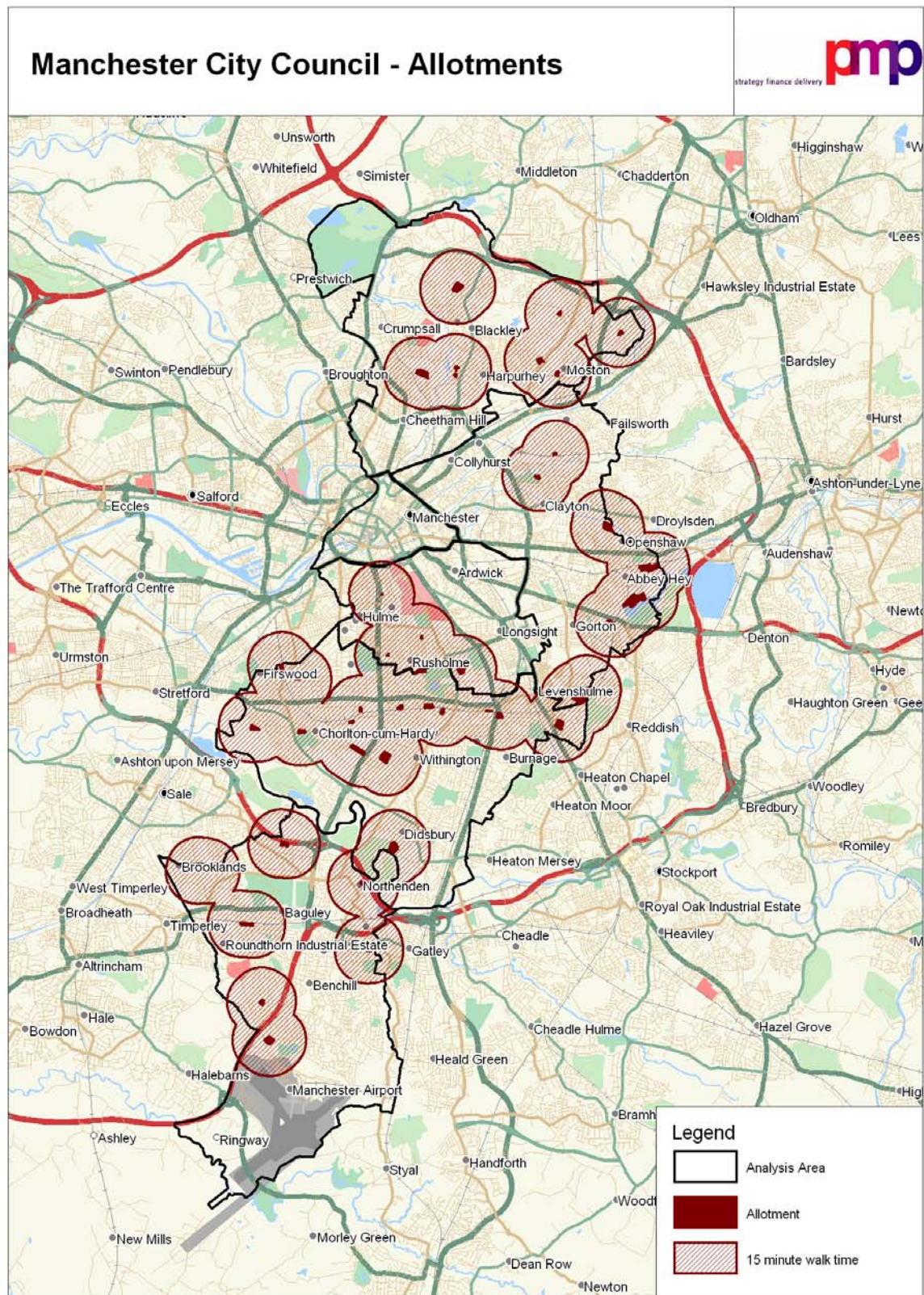
10.22. In contrast, attendees at drop in sessions and workshops highlighted that the quality of allotments is varying, and highlighted the role that Allotment Societies play in proactively addressing ongoing issues. Vandalism and security was reported to be a particular concern. A lack of toilets was also perceived to limit the number of female residents who wished to use allotments. Other issues identified included a lack of storage and poor drainage.

### **Accessibility**

- 10.23. The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing opportunities for all people to use the sites. Site-specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits and information and signage, transport and general accessibility issues were assessed.
- 10.24. The main issue arising from the site visits was that signage was perceived to be particularly poor at a number of allotments across the City.
- 10.25. Consultation demonstrated that the majority of respondents (68%) expect to travel on foot to reach an allotment, indicating that allotments are expected to be in close proximity to the home. The most commonly held expectation was that a journey should take 5 – 10 minutes by foot (55%).
- 10.26. Map 10.1 outlines the distribution of allotments across the City. It can be seen that allotments are sporadically distributed across the City although in general access to sites is good. In light of the importance of local access to allotments, a 15 minute walk time catchment is illustrated, enabling easy identification of areas where residents are outside of the catchment of a facility.



Map 10.1 – Distribution of allotments across the City



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Not to scale



**Setting Provision Standards**

- 10.27. In light of the demand led nature of allotments and the other intricacies of evaluating need, no standards have been set for the provision of allotments. Instead, Manchester City Council and its partners are committed to maximising the opportunities for local residents to tend an allotment that is of high quality and in close proximity to the home.
- 10.28. Only a quality vision has been set and it is intended that the Council will work with the allotment societies to achieve this.

Recommended standard – Allotments
<p>The Council and its partners will strive to provide allotments which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ accessible</li> <li>➤ provide a sanctuary for biodiversity and habitat creation</li> <li>➤ safe and secure</li> <li>➤ clean and litter free</li> <li>➤ offer parking</li> <li>➤ offer appropriate ancillary facilities.</li> </ul>

10.29. As clearly identified throughout this section there are a number of key issues arising with regards the provision of allotments which will need to be addressed over the LDF period. In particular:

- the current supply of allotments is insufficient to meet demand – this is illustrated by the waiting lists on several sites – demand is equivalent of 127% of supply
- the quality of allotments is varying
- there is a lack of awareness of the opportunities available.

**Priorities for the future delivery of allotments**

10.30. In light of the shortfalls of allotments across the City and the high levels of use at all allotment sites, all provision should be protected from development through policy in the Local Development Framework. Where allotments are lost to development, policy should ensure that these are reprovided in close proximity to the previous site unless it can be proven that the site is surplus to requirements.

<b>ALL1</b>	Ensure that well used allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework. In the event of the loss of allotments through development, policy should ensure that sites are reprovided unless it can be proven that the site is surplus to requirement.
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<b>ALL2</b>	Ensure that demand generated from new housing developments is considered and contributions towards the provision of new facilities are requested when required.
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10.31. A proactive approach to the future delivery of allotments will be essential if the issues raised are to be addressed and allotment provision is to meet the needs of all key stakeholders. An allotment strategy should be produced to guide the future delivery of these facilities across the City.

**ALL3**

Develop a City wide strategy for the future delivery of allotments across Manchester. This strategy should be developed in partnership with key stakeholders including AMAS, PCT and led by Manchester Leisure.

10.32. This strategy should address:

- **Quantitative issues**
  - Maximising the number of residents that can use existing allotment sites
  - Provision of new allotment sites where required

**ALL4**

Consideration should be given to the implementation of appropriate policies to promote effective usage of allotment sites including:

- providing half plots as opposed to full plots to ensure that sites can accommodate a higher number of residents
- renting sites to Manchester City Council residents only
- ensuring that residents only have one allotment plot at any one time
- promoting appropriate use of allotments
- considering additional means of supplying allotments – this may include provision at school sites or within other sites.

Where waiting lists remain following the implementation of the above policies, new provision will be required.

For new sites, explore alternative opportunities for the provision of allotments including co-location at school sites.

Regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is increasing through ongoing evaluation of waiting lists. Evaluation of demand should consider demand in areas where allotments are not currently provided as well as monitoring the usage of existing sites.

- **Qualitative issues**
  - Improvement of existing sites to ensure all meet the quality vision
  - Development of new sites of a high standard



### ALL5

In light of the importance placed on maintenance and upkeep of sites during consultation, effort should also be made to ensure that allotment sites meet the recommended quality criteria. In many instances, the quality of sites is as important as meeting unmet demand. Issues relating to the safety and security of sites, as well as cleanliness, maintenance and the provision of ancillary accommodation may lead to a lack of interest in the use of allotments from residents. In contrast, high quality sites are likely to generate additional interest.

Undertake a programme of improvement across allotment sites/  
This should include drainage works and provision of ancillary accommodation, storage and security.

- **Awareness and promotion of allotments.**

- Promotion of allotments across the City.

### ALL6

Promote the opportunities available and the wider benefits that allotments bring to local residents across Manchester.

### Summary

- 10.33. There are 40 allotment sites across Manchester covering a total 59.40 hectares. This equates to 0.13 hectares per 1000 population.
- 10.34. There are currently 632 residents on the waiting list for an allotment plot in Manchester. This equates to 28% of demand. However, 89 plots are available for immediate rent and a further 102 plots will be available subject to infrastructure improvements.
- 10.35. The average quality score of an allotment in the City is 76%, indicating that the quality of allotments is generally average. However, since the site assessments have been completed there have been a number of qualitative improvements. This is highlighted by the 95 plots that have been refurbished in the past year.
- 10.36. Application of the accessibility standard indicates that there is a sporadic distribution of allotments in Manchester. However, despite this, accessibility to existing sites is generally good.
- 10.37. It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision for allotments in Manchester that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework and/or other delivery mechanisms are:
- ensure that well used allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework
  - ensure that demand generated from new housing developments is considered and contributions towards the provision of new facilities are requested when required
  - develop a City wide strategy for the future delivery of allotments across Manchester

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- consideration should be given to the implementation of appropriate policies to promote effective usage of allotment sites
- effort should also be made to ensure that allotment sites meet the recommended quality criteria
- promote the opportunities available and the wider benefits that allotments bring to local residents.