



# Allotments & Community Gardens

## Aims of the Allotments and Community Gardens Action Plan

- To help protect allotment and community garden sites in Lambeth through recognising their importance in terms of local biodiversity and as a wildlife resource.
- To raise the profile of allotments and community gardens, and encourage a greater uptake and involvement in the Borough's allotments and community gardens.
- To encourage allotment plot holders and community gardeners to manage sites to benefit or protect wildlife and biodiversity in Lambeth.

### A) What do we mean by 'allotments and community gardens'?

Allotments are areas provided for individuals to grow their own food and segregated into 'plots' of various sizes. Individual plot holders normally produce food for their own consumption, but in reality most plot holders take a very co-operative approach to the management of the site and support each other in terms of advice, materials and good practice.

'Community gardens' is a broad generic term used to describe areas of land where management and use is 'communal' and reflects a consensus of all members or people on site. Whilst growing food may be a major activity, community gardens can also be managed for environmental education, training and play purposes, or act as the location of wildlife gardens.

### B) Are there any allotments and community gardens in Lambeth?

There are about 15 identified allotment and community garden sites in Lambeth, comprising a total area of 16.6 ha, which amounts to about 0.61 % of the total land area of the Borough.

In Lambeth the ratio of available allotment plots to individual residents is very low, about 600 plots against a Borough population of 270,000 – a ratio of 1 plot for every 450 individuals. There are about 8 working allotment sites in Lambeth, scattered across the Borough. Some are very large (Rosendale Allotments, 400 plots), whilst others are small and compact (Lorn Road Allotments, 29 plots). A number of allotment sites in Lambeth are no longer actively worked and have fallen into dereliction or allowed to evolve into 'wild' areas.

Most of the community gardens in Lambeth are on sites owned by the local authority and either leased to community groups or managed by committees of site users. Many community gardens are popular for play, gardening, nature conservation and environmental education

### **C) Why do we need an Action Plan for allotments and community gardens?**

Many local authorities, with increasing pressures on budgets and demands for expenditure on statutory or core services, view allotments and community gardens as 'non-core' and have cut funding accordingly.

Greater reliance by local authorities on contractors or externalised services to maintain sites has reduced the level and standard of service provided to Council managed allotments, and probably the same is true of many community gardens.

Many people (including the media) have a poor image of allotments and community gardens, viewing allotments as 'old-fashioned' and no longer recognising a modern way of living and working. Community gardens can be perceived by some as being 'cliquey' or isolationist. Such attitudes are very wrong, and reflect ignorance as to their purpose, social benefits and community objectives.

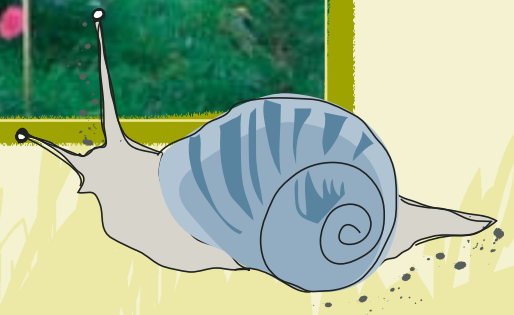
Increasing pressures on people's lifestyles means many cannot find the time to take up an allotment plot, or if they do they find they cannot cope with the demands of maintaining it.

Many allotment sites have been lost to developments like housing or industrial estates. Some community gardens have gone the same way, when community use has declined or the landowner sells the site for a development which provides a greater and more secure income.

Many urban allotment and community garden sites suffer heavily from vandalism, being seen as 'easy targets'. Regular vandalism often deters better plot take up or community involvement and soon drives out legitimate users or forces the site into abandonment.



*Lorn Road Allotments SW9: view looking southwest.  
Lambeth Council 2005*



## D) What is the legal status of allotments and community gardens?

Local authorities are legally bound to provide allotments under Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotment Act 1908 – these are ‘statutory allotments’.

The Allotment Act 1922 defines the term ‘allotment garden’. Statutory allotment sites are protected, but ‘temporary’ allotments are not. Many community gardens are not statutory and not protected by existing allotment legislation.

Statutory allotments regarded as ‘surplus to requirements’ can only be sold off with the consent of the Secretary of State under Section 8 of the Allotment Act 1925.

On 25th March 1998 the Government introduced a requirement for local authorities to demonstrate steps taken to promote allotments in their area before they can obtain consent from the Secretary of State to dispose of allotment land.



*Lorn Road Allotments SW9: view looking west – scrub, woodland and marginal habitats. Lambeth Council 2005*

## E) What will the Allotments and Community Gardens Action Plan do?

**Objective 1.** We will increase uptake and use of allotments in the Borough, and aim for a 10% increase in the uptake of available plots by 2007.

**Objective 2.** We will promote through the management of Lambeth’s allotments and community gardens practices which encourage sustainability, protection of wildlife and increase their biodiversity value. A network to provide advice and support to allotment and community garden associations will be in place by 2008.

## F) Who is involved in the Allotments and Community Gardens Action Plan?

### 1. Partnerships

The Lead Partner for the Lambeth Allotments and Community Gardens Action Plan is Lambeth Council’s Parks and Greenspaces Business Unit (Lambeth Parks). Other Co-Lead Partners would be Lambeth Planning, along with the Council’s Grounds Maintenance Contractor.

The Lead Community Partners will be the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), and the Lambeth Horticultural Society (LHS).

Other Partners include associations representing allotment sites and community gardens in Lambeth, plus the Greater London Authority, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and Vauxhall City Farm.

## 2. Contact for information

For more information on the Lambeth Allotments and Community Gardens Action Plan, including copies of this plan in paper or electronic format, please contact:

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## 3. Further information and advice

Further advice on allotments and community gardens, their protection and conservation, can be found on the following websites.

- Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>)
- National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/>)
- DEFRA (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/>)
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (<http://www.btcv.org/>)
- London Wildlife Trust (<http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/>)
- Greater London Authority (<http://www.london.gov.uk/londonissues/>)



*St. Paul's Churchyard SW4: 'Eden at St. Paul's' community garden, looking northwest.  
Lambeth Council 2005*