

**North Hertfordshire
District Council**

Allotments Action Plan (2014 – 2019)



**An Action Plan of the
Green Space Management Strategy**

Contents

Contents	2
INTRODUCTION	3
NATIONAL CONTEXT	3
LOCAL CONTEXT	4
Baldock.....	5
Hitchin.....	5
Letchworth.....	5
FINANCE	6
DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT	7
Dependence	7
Participation.....	7
Delegation	7
Semi-autonomy.....	7
Autonomy.....	8
ACTION PLAN	8
ALLOTMENT LOCATION MAPS	8

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Allotments Action Plan, a document integral to the Green Space Management Strategy, is to form a structured approach to the ongoing provision of allotments managed by North Hertfordshire District Council within the District.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The provision of allotments for the local community is the only leisure activity covered by statutes. The obligations of provider authorities and the rights of tenants are covered in a number of Acts of Parliament from 1908 to 1950. Other important regulatory Acts are -

Disability Discrimination Act (D.D.A) 2004 Part 3: The aim of the D.D.A is to enable those with all kinds of disabilities the same access to goods, services, employment etc as those without a disability. Part 3 of the Act requires reasonable adjustments to physical features to remove barriers to services. The Act covers public services and allotment sites will need to conform to the act.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000) Planning Policy Guidance note 3. (PPG3) Housing: The Government urges Local Authorities to increase the density of residential developments. This often has the effect of reducing the size of gardens provided for private dwellings which underlines the importance of adequate provision for allotment gardens.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 17: Local Authorities now have a duty to consider crime prevention and community safety in most of the decisions that they make.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: This is a major item of legislation, which covers health and safety on outdoor green space. Sections 3 & 4 of the Act place a clear responsibility on a Council to ensure as far as is reasonable practicable, the health and safety of those who use all their facilities.

The Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984: Under the 1957 Act a Council which provides outdoor green space has a duty to ensure that lawful visitors are kept reasonably safe whilst using facilities. A Council also has a limited duty under the 1984 Act to ensure the safety of trespassers.

The Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977: This Act limits the extent to which civil liability can be avoided.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR): Under these regulations there is an obligation to report certain accidents occurring at outdoor green space to the Health & Safety Executive.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990: This legislation empowers Local Authorities to deal with nuisance from land if it is considered that it amounts to a nuisance at law. A statutory nuisance is difficult to define concisely, but it generally describes an unlawful activity that causes a substantial, material and unreasonable interference with a resident's occupation of their property.

The Smallholdings and Allotment Act, 1908: This legislation replaces any earlier allotment laws. It outlines the local Authority's duty of provision including Compulsory Purchase.

The Allotments Act, 1922, the Allotments Act, 1925, Allotments Act, 1950: All refine the 1908 Act in security of tenure, Local Authority responsibilities, regulations, rights and privileges for tenants and compensation of termination of tenancy.

The Town & Country Planning Act, 1947: Removes the obligation by Local Authorities to reserve land for allotments in local plans.

1972 Local Government Act: Removes the obligation by Local Authorities to appoint allotment committees (1925 Act).

1980 Local Government Planning and Land Act: Removes the obligation by Local Authorities to keep separate allotment accounts and statistical information

LOCAL CONTEXT

North Hertfordshire District Council manages and maintains 13 allotment sites in North Herts.

Other providers in the district are Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Royston Town Council, Hertfordshire County Council, North Hertfordshire Homes and Parish Councils.

The Allotments Strategy 2004 -10 highlighted long term decline in the popularity of allotments and identified rationalisation and the need to investigate alternative horticultural uses for the sites. It also argued the need for investment to sustain sites to an acceptable customer standard. This was realised in a Capital Investment Programme of over £80,000 in a five-year period.

During the term of the strategy, demand for allotments nationally made a u-turn and demand increased at an unprecedented rate with waiting lists on all of the sites. The Allotment Action Plan 2011–14 concentrated on dealing with this demand by utilising management procedures and expanding provision. Conversely, in 2012 demand has fallen rapidly and vacant plots are now re-appearing on most sites.

In addition to traditional allotment plots, Old Hale Way, Hitchin is home to Buzzworks whilst Burford Way, Hitchin is home to Honeyworks. Both are run autonomously by a community group of Hitchin bee-keepers not only to provide a much needed location for honey bee hives but also provide a learning centre for schools and a training centre for prospective bee-keepers. They also provide *earth closet* toilet facilities on these sites for the wider allotment fraternity.

In the past, Countryside Management Services have provided help and initiatives in improving biodiversity on allotment sites and their environs and will continue to do so.

Baldock

Baldock has two active NHDC allotment sites –

Baldock	ownership	condition	access	plots	waiting*
Clothall	HCC	good	poor	96	2
North Road	NHDC	good	fair	103	0

* as of Aug 2012

Clare Crescent is an additional small site formally managed and maintained by North Hertfordshire District Council Housing Services. Now under NHDC ownership. Not promoted at present because there are no facilities and the site is landlocked with only difficult pedestrian access.

Hitchin

Hitchin has four NHDC allotment sites –

Hitchin	ownership	condition	access	plots	waiting*
Burford	NHDC	fair	fair	53	7
Old Hale Way	NHDC	good	fair	169	2
Pirton Road	Private Landowner	good	v. poor	30	8
Ransoms	NHDC	good	good	31	17

* as of Aug 2012

Letchworth

Letchworth has seven NHDC allotment sites –

Letchworth	ownership	condition	access	plots	waiting*
Hillbrow	LGCHF	v. poor	fair	43	0
Norton	LGCHF	good	good	105	0
Pryor Way	LGCHF	good	fair	48	0
Radburn	NHDC	good	good	21	2
Runnalow	LGCHF	good	fair	88	3
Wilbury	LGCHF	good	good	87	0
Woolgrove	LGCHF	good	good	39	0

* as of Aug 2012

FINANCE

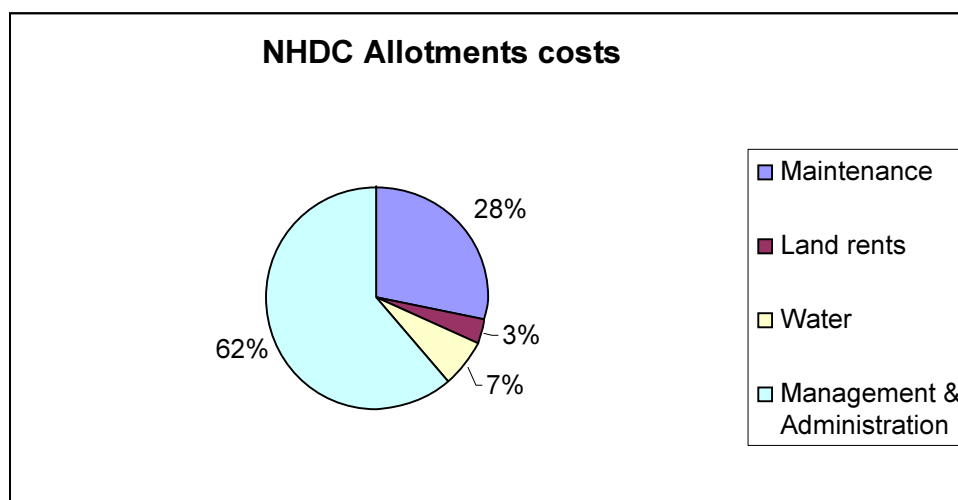
An annual maintenance budget of £12,100 in total for the 13 allotment sites is allocated to upkeep roadways, fencing, taps, underground water-pipes, flytipping clearance, signage, fencing, gates, padlocks etc.

£2,200 of this is given in grant form to the Baldock Association as devolved maintenance responsibilities for Clothall and North Road.

Water charges are a separate undefined budget amounting to about £2,400 in a normal year.

The free clearance and rotavation service to new allotment tenants was withdrawn and budgets accordingly reduced in 1998, plots are therefore now offered 'sold as seen'.

In recent years the level of plot rental charges to allotment tenants has been calculated to provide a no profit, no subsidy service. A break-down of the expenditure proportions of these charges is as follows –



DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT

Devolved management schemes can benefit both local authorities and their allotment tenants. The local authority can make savings with a reduced burden of administration, customer liaison and maintenance responsibilities. Plotolders can achieve a sense of pride and ownership of the allotment site enhancing its environment and reducing such problems as theft and anti-social behaviour from outsiders. They have a stake in the future development of the site and have opportunities to bring their own skills and expertise to new challenges in what is for many their retirement years. They also have greater opportunities to obtain funding from other sources apart from the Council.

The report 'Future for Allotments' stated "There is little doubt that, when successfully implemented, self management schemes ensure greater control of a site by allotment holders and tend to work to the benefit of the site."

However, it is recognised that not all associations may be able or willing to take on all the function of devolved management. Therefore a phased approach needs to be adopted which is appropriate to individual associations.

The involvement of allotment plotolders in the management of their site can be categorised as follows -

Dependence

Neither plotolders nor associations play any part in allotment site management beyond exchange of information, perhaps through a representative.

Participation

Plotolders informally accept responsibility for minor maintenance works, and some mechanism may exist (such as an allotments forum) for the views of plotolders or site representatives to be canvassed on capital expenditure and repairs.

Delegation

A properly constituted allotment association accepts formal responsibility for a range of duties under license from the local authority, under financial arrangements which release a proportion of rental income for this purpose. For example, the association may arrange tenancies, collect rents and carry out regular maintenance duties, but leave the local authority to carry out repairs, pay for the overheads such as water, and undertake all legal formalities.

Semi-autonomy

The allotment association leases the site from the council, arranges tenancy agreements and reinvests revenue on maintenance, repair and capital items. The council reserves the right to review the lease at periodic intervals and has defined oversight and strategic functions. Associations which have implemented fully accountable schemes for devolved management straddle the boundary between the allotment and community gardening movements.

Autonomy

Any existing allotment sites are sold or leased to allotment associations or organised groups who take on the provision and management of allotments in their entirety.

ACTION PLAN

Currently, Baldock Allotments & Leisure Gardeners Association have a devolved maintenance grant arrangement for the two Baldock Allotment sites. Negotiations are taking place for the Association to take over the management of the Baldock sites under a full Autonomy arrangement.

Letchworth Heritage Foundation has also shown interest in accommodating the Letchworth sites within their own provision under a full Autonomy arrangement.

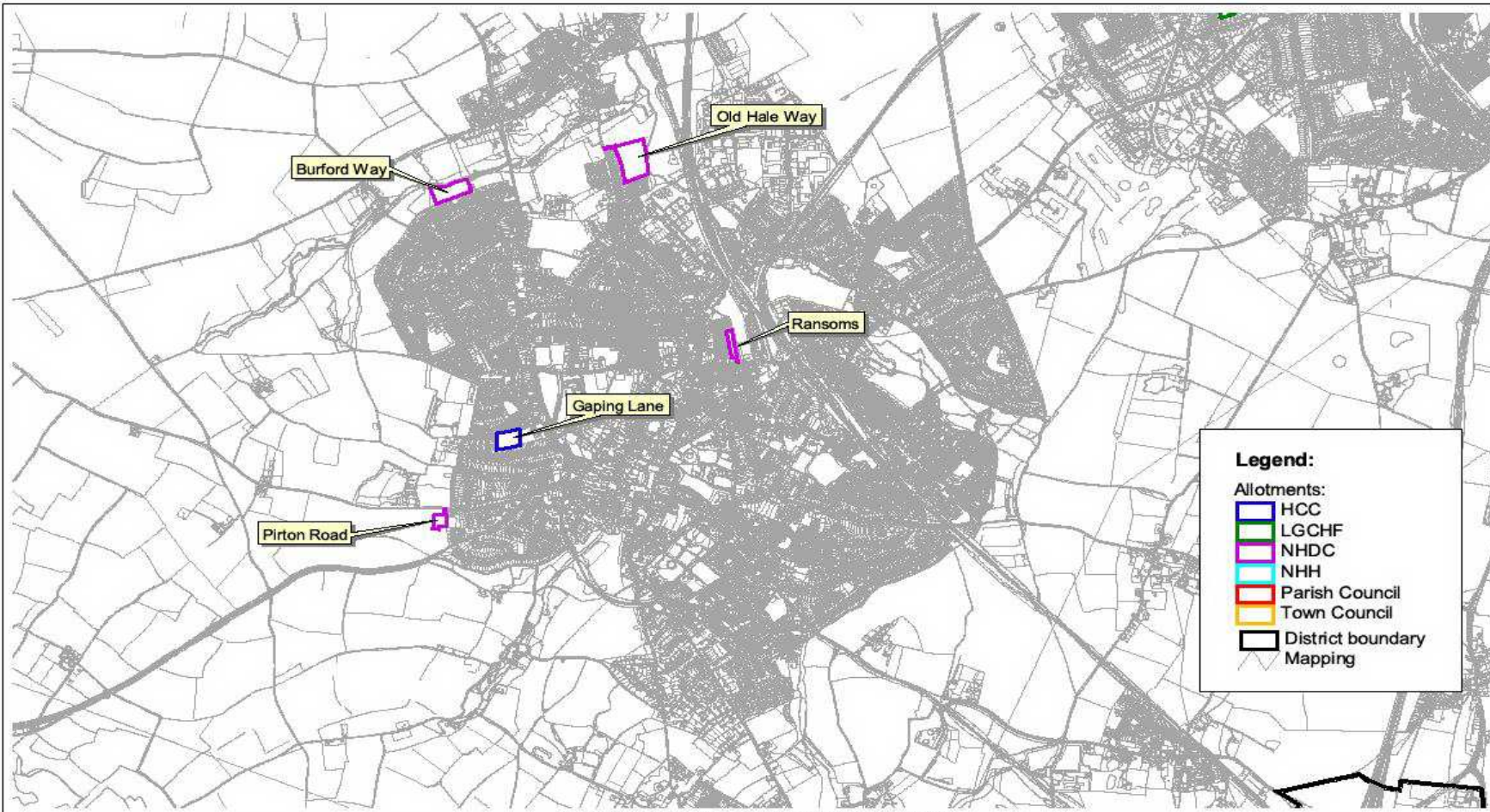
Enquiries from other local associations and interested groups in devolved management arrangements are the future goal of the District Council and would be facilitated.

ALLOTMENT LOCATION MAPS

North Hertfordshire District Council

Hitchin Allotments

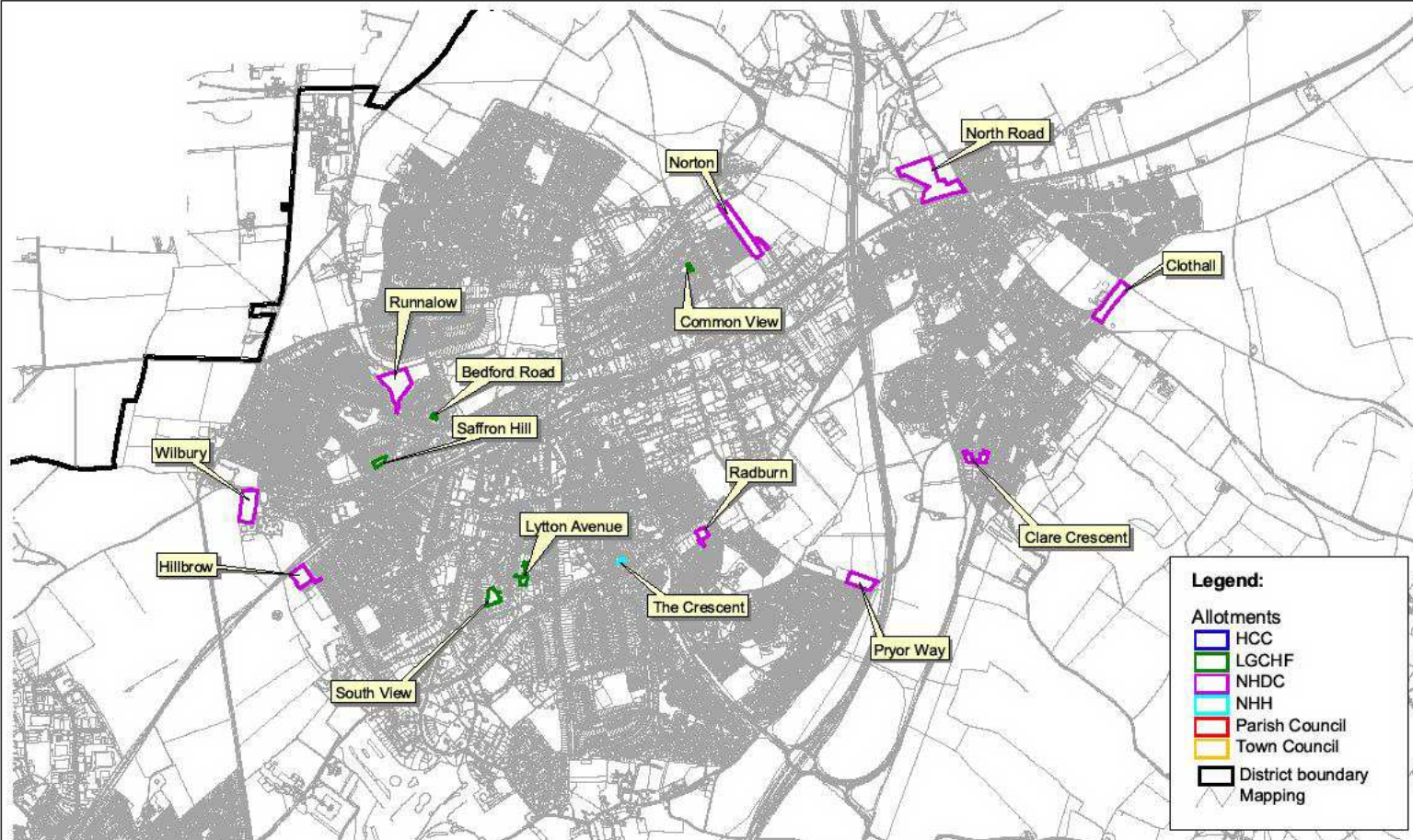
NHDC - Allotment Strategy



North Hertfordshire District Council

Letchworth and Baldock allotments

NHDC - Allotment Strategy



Scale 1:20,000

DONOT REPRODUCE

Job ID: PART 3187

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. North Herts District Council. OS Licence No. LA078794/2004