

Allotments and community gardens

Definition

- 11.1 This includes all forms of allotments, with a primary purpose 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.

Picture 11.1 Rye allotments (Site ID 734)



Strategic context and consultation

- 11.2 Like other open space types, allotments can provide a number of wider benefits to the community as well as the primary use of growing produce. These include:
- bringing together people of different cultural backgrounds
 - improving physical and mental health
 - providing a source of recreation
 - wider contribution to green and open space.
- 11.3 The Local Plan recognises that allotments are one of many key components of the social infrastructure of towns and villages as well as having a key role in healthy living objectives. Policy CF2 in the Plan states that allotment sites will be protected from development unless they are surplus or improved alternative provision is made.

- 11.4 Only nine respondents to the household survey use allotments most frequently. The most significant quality problems highlighted by these users were regarding vandalism and graffiti. Of these users four walked to their nearest site and five drove. Seven of the users took less than 10 minutes to reach their allotment plot. However these statistics may not be representative of the majority of allotment users in the District.

Setting provision standards

- 11.5 In setting local standards for allotments there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I. The recommended local standards have been summarised below.

Current position and quantity

- 11.6 There are 26 sites in the District with a total area of 15.98ha. This equates to an average site size of 0.61ha and a current provision level of 0.19ha per 1,000 population.
- 11.7 Table 11.1 below, provides a breakdown of sites per analysis area. It shows that the urban areas have a larger number of sites than the rural and they tend have a larger average sites size too.

Table 11.1 Analysis area breakdown

Analysis area	Number of sites	Total hectares	Average site size (ha)
Bexhill	9	8.37	0.93
Battle	3	1.58	0.53
Rye	2	1.79	0.89
East Rother	9	3.02	0.34
West Rother	3	1.22	0.41

- 11.8 The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners suggest a national standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households (ie 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on 2 people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.25ha per 1,000 population based on an average plot size of 250 metres squared.

- 11.9 The household survey results indicate a significant number of district residents who had no view on the provision of allotments suggesting the demand is not high for additional provision. However, consultation with providers of allotments indicates that demand, in some areas, is outstripping supply.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUANTITY STANDARD

*Urban – 0.45ha per
1,000 population*

*Rural – 0.17ha per
1,000 population*

- 11.10 In order to promote equality between the three urban and two rural areas, the local standard has been set at the higher urban and rural area. It is recommended that a rural local standard of 0.17ha per 1,000 population and an urban standard of 0.45ha per 1,000 population be set.

Quality standard

- 11.11 There are no existing national or local standards for the quality of allotments.
- 11.12 User aspirations from the household survey for allotments in Rother District were well-kept grass, parking facilities, dog free areas and toilets.
- 11.13 The average quality score for sites in the District is 61%. The highest scoring sites are:
- Badgers Mount, Bexhill (Site ID 154)
 - Knebworth Road, Bexhill (Site ID 179).
- 11.14 The full context and justification for this standard is outlined in Appendix H.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD

'A well-maintained site with appropriate ancillary facilities (eg water supplies, litter bins, toilets, parking facilities), that is easy to get to and easy to get around. Sites should have appropriate boundaries, encourage sustainability and ideally be situated in areas of good soil quality.'

Accessibility standard

- 11.15 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards for this type of open space.
- 11.16 The average accessibility score for sites in the District is 53%. The highest scoring sites are:
- All Saints Lane, Bexhill (Site ID 188)
 - Knebworth Road, Bexhill (Site ID 179)
 - Crowhurst Lane, Bexhill (Site ID 185).
- 11.17 Only a limited number of respondents to the household survey stated that the type of open space they use most frequently is allotments. For those that did vandalism and graffiti, poor maintenance and dog fouling were seen as the dominant negative issues.
- 11.18 The general perception from the household survey (75% level) is that a walk time of up to 15 minutes is reasonable. This was consistent across all of the analysis areas. However discussion with Council Officers has shown that a large number of allotment users drive to sites and that a 15 minute walktime would be an unrealistic target. It is therefore recommended that the local standard be set at a 20 minute level. This distance along roads and footpaths equates to a 960m straight line distance.

RECOMMENDED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD

20 min walk

(1.6km)

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

- 11.19 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs, we apply both the quantitative provision of allotments in Rother together with the local standard for accessibility. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.
- 11.20 Map 11.1 shows there are a number of settlements in West Rother without access to allotments. The main areas without access are Flimwell, Hurst Green, Etchingham and Burwash. The area of Robertsbridge has only partial coverage however this is not felt to be a priority at this time.
- 11.21 As the Flimwell area is relatively small and close to the allotment site in Ticehurst, this area is only a medium priority for new provision. New sites in Hurst Green and Burwash should be a high priority for the Council due to the lack of provision and comparatively high populations in these areas. The Etchingham area should only be a medium priority as new provision in Hurst Green and Burwash would improve access to allotments here.

ALLOT 1

New allotment sites in Hurst Green and Burwash to be of a high priority. New allotment sites in Etchingham and Flimwell of a medium priority. Further opportunities will be investigated in other large service villages within Western Rother on an opportunity-led basis.

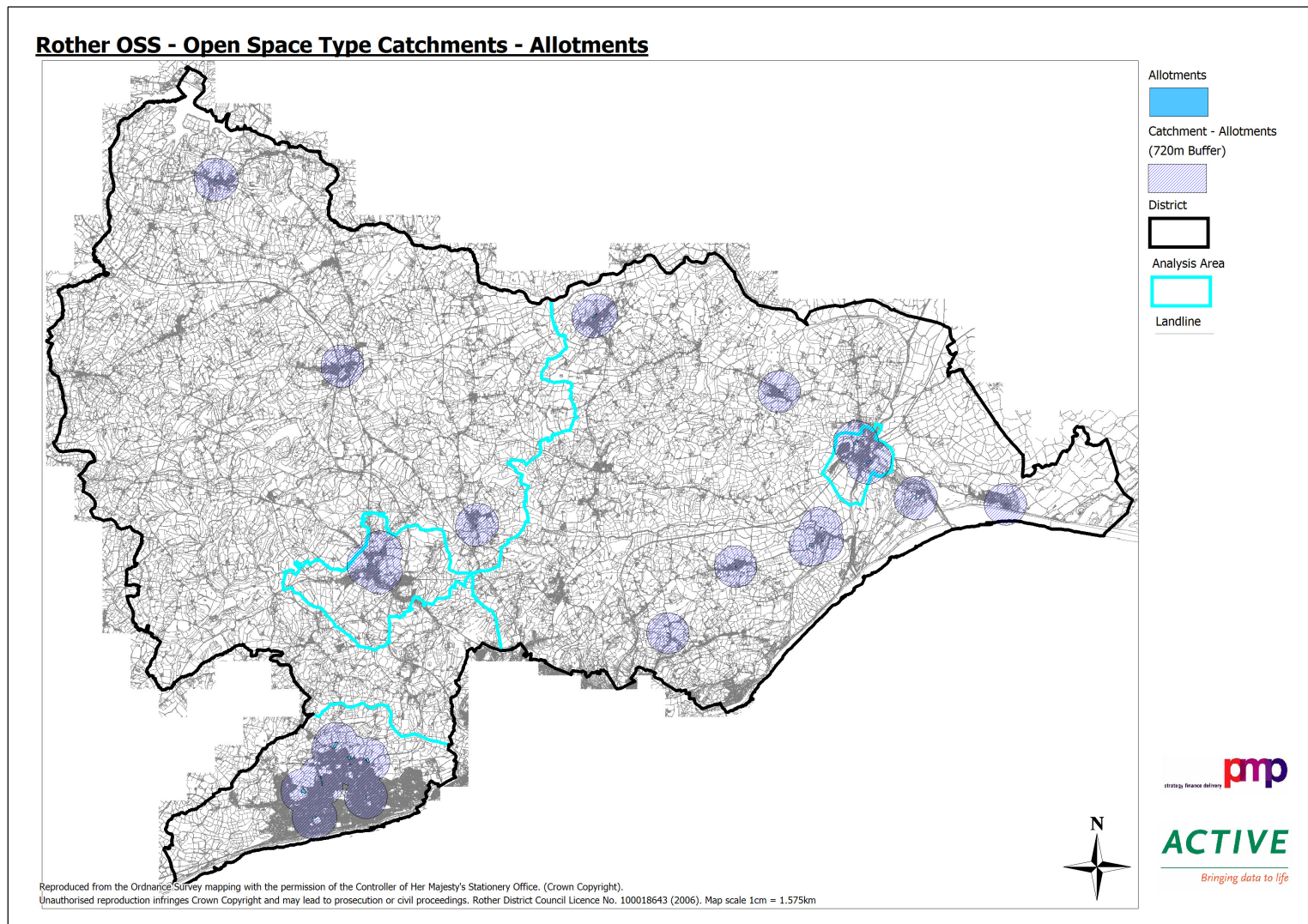
- 11.22 In East Rother, there are nine allotment sites. This leaves a number of significantly sized settlements without any form of provision. These are Broad Oak, Westfield, Brede and Fairlight Cove. The Council should prioritise new provision according to the size of settlements without provision. Therefore the Fairlight Cove area should be the first priority, followed by Westfield, Broad Oak and then Brede.

ALLOT 2

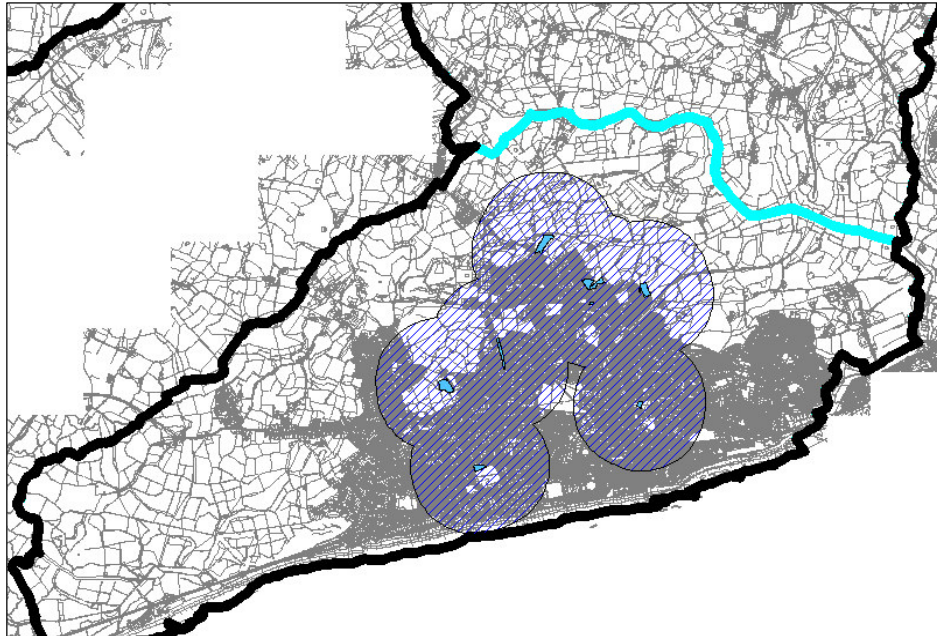
New allotment sites in Fairlight Cove, Westfield and Broad Oak to be of a high priority. New allotment site in Brede of a medium priority.

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Map 11.1 Accessibility catchment for allotments



Map 11.2 Allotments in Bexhill

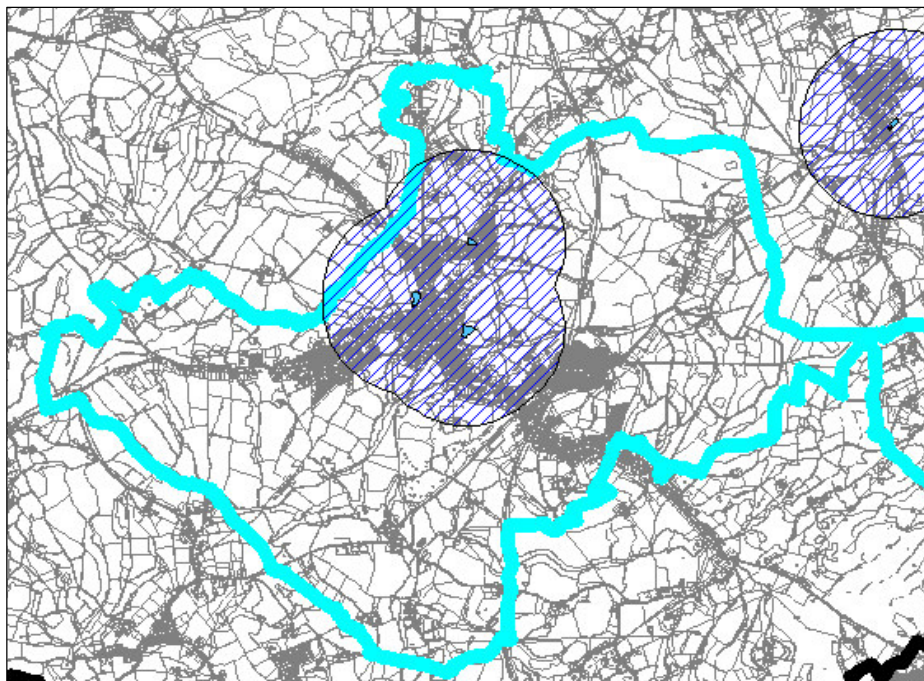


- 11.23 Map 11.2 shows that the main areas of Bexhill without provision are to the east and west with one small area centrally located. The pressures on land are too great in the central area for any new provision without significant new development. Therefore it is recommended that the Council concentrate on obtaining one new site, subject to demand, to the west and east of the Bexhill urbanised area.

ALLOT 3

Subject to demand, the Council to identify new sites on the west and east of the Bexhill urbanised area.

Map 11.3 Allotments in Battle

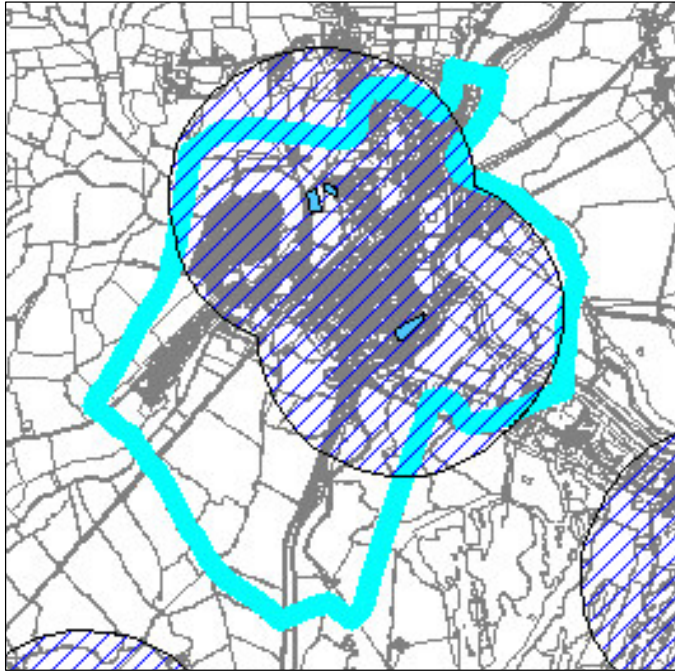


- 11.24 Map 11.3 illustrates that allotment provision in Battle tends to be concentrated around the central and north areas. The Council should seek to provide a new site to the south of the Town. Depending on demand levels this should be either entirely new provision or the reallocation of an existing site.

ALLOT 4

Subject to demand, the Council to provide a new allotment site in south Battle through new provision or the reallocation of existing provision.

Map 11.4 Allotments in Rye



- 11.25 Map 11.4 shows that the two allotment sites in Rye provide almost universal coverage for this area. As there are a number of urban areas in Rother without access to allotment sites, it is not recommended that the Rye area be focused upon for this typology.

Value assessment

- 11.26 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning for future provision for allotments. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality or by assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.
- 11.27 The highest scoring sites in the District for both access and quality are:
- Badgers Mount, Bexhill (Site ID 154)
 - Knebworth Road, Bexhill (Site ID 179)
 - All Saints, Bexhill (Site ID 188).

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

11.28 These sites must continue to be maintained to their current standard and must be protected. These sites must also set a benchmark for all other allotments in the District, existing and new.

11.29 The lowest scoring sites are:

- Sedlescombe allotments, West Rother (Site ID 343)
- Chain Lane, Battle (Site ID 265)
- Rye Harbour allotments, East Rother (Site ID 42).

11.30 The majority of the lower scoring sites are the only provision in the area, therefore the Council should focus on improving these sites rather than redesignation.

Summary and recommendations

11.31 Allotments can provide a number of wider benefits to the community in addition to the primary use of growing produce. These include improving physical and mental health and contributing to the greenspace environment and bio-diversity.

11.32 When applying accessibility standards, large gaps are seen in many areas of the District. However, as allotments are demand led it is recommended that quantity issues be tackled before accessibility. Once all areas have adequate quantity provision, the Council should then focus upon qualitative and accessibility improvements.

ALLOT 1	New allotment sites in Hurst Green and Burwash to be of a high priority. New allotment sites in Etchingham and Flimwell of a medium priority. Further opportunities will be investigated in other large service villages within Western Rother on an opportunity-led basis.
ALLOT 2	New allotment sites in Fairlight Cove, Westfield and Broad Oak to be of a high priority. New allotment site in Brede of a medium priority.
ALLOT 3	Subject to demand, the Council to identify new sites on the west and east of the Bexhill urbanised area.
ALLOT 4	Subject to demand, the Council to provide a new allotment site in south Battle through new provision or the reallocation of existing provision.