

Wimborne Allotment Association
Allotments as Recreational Activity
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Allotments as Recreational Activity

I have previously submitted a formal response to the East Dorset District Council Core Strategy Pre-Submission process on behalf of the Wimborne Allotment Association.

This document introduces additional new supporting evidence to support the Association's contention that WMC3 is unsoundly based.

Recent research has confirmed that the right of allotment gardening to be considered as recreational activity has been enshrined in law - Harwood v Borough of Reigate and Banstead 1981 (Chancery Division of High Court). A transcript is available: <http://www.baf.me.uk/harwood.pdf>

The Wimborne Allotment Association therefore contends that its members are entitled to the full consideration of The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf:

Paragraph 74 of the current version explicitly provides:

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.*

There is no evidence that any assessment has been undertaken clearly showing the current allotments as being surplus to requirements. Indeed, the Core Strategy itself just about confirms the opposite to be the case but no clear allotment policy has been developed for the Wimborne area as has been the case with the Christchurch Borough Council who have adopted a policy to cover the period 2012 -2028 -

<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=177879&filetype=pdf>

As little or no firm detail is given as to alternative provision within the current core strategy, quite clearly at this stage the 'equivalence or better' test cannot be considered to have been met. Equally, there is no clear strategy as to how important issues such as parking, onsite access to water, security of access, bonfires etc will be handled.

The national standard size for an allotment plot is considered to be 10 poles or 252 sq. Mtrs. This can be confirmed from a variety of sources but the most reliable is undoubtedly The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd -

<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/>.

This has been considered as being the area required to feed an average family. The Cuthbury and Julians Road allotments have a combined total of approximately 140 plots. In my approximate estimation, the average size per plot, minus access paths etc, is just over 100 sq.Mtrs. The current average plot size is less than half the standard and should not in my view be reduced further as that would clearly be contrary to the 'equivalence or better' test.

An early Core Strategy draft document showed alternative allotment provision on three sites, Cranborne Road north, south of Leigh Road, and south of Julians Road adjacent to the cricket pitch. The pre-submission document map **8.5**

<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=171617&filetype=pdf> does not now show any land set aside for allotment plots at Cranborne Road north.

Leigh Road south, map **8.6** shows two areas of land as "**possible** allotments". Comparing this area to adjacent sports pitches it would appear that it would provide no more than 30 plots of a similar size of those already existing at Cuthbury and Julians Road. The "**possible**" designation is exactly that, provisional rather than definitive and potentially subject to further change as has already been seen in the previous iterations of the Core Strategy and as such does not provide reassurance to any of our members, many of whom will be inconvenienced by having to travel further to tend to their crops.

The land south of Julians Road, next to the cricket ground, map **8.3** would provide in my estimation no more than 50 plots. The land is privately owned and I would question the extent to which reliance can be placed on its future availability, if and when, the detailed planning stage is reached.

Conclusion

It would appear there has been little consideration given to allotment gardeners. The Core Strategy should have contained provision for existing plot holders as well as incorporating room for future expansion given the potential needs of new inhabitants and a coherent strategy to support and promote this most basic and most natural of recreational activities. The land currently provisionally allocated appears to only provide for 80 or so plots of the size of the currently existing plots, which as already stated fall short of the standard accepted plot size, for the current 140 plot holders. There therefore appears to be a clear shortfall of a minimum of 60 plots.

I would contend that the failure to draw up an allotment policy represents a lack of vision for provision of this nature which supports our contention as to the current unsoundness of WMC3. Without an assessment of need of even the most basic nature and a clearly documented strategy, we consider it impossible for decisions to be made concerning adequate future provision. Indeed how could anyone be convinced that the loss of the current allotments, representing as they do a space in which recreational activity is enjoyed '*would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location*' as required by Paragraph 74 of the current version of The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) under the current Core Strategy.