

Allotments

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 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 different cultural backgrounds
 - improving physical and mental health
 - providing a source of recreation
 - wider contribution to green and open space.

Figure 10.1 – Knoll Road Allotments



- 10.3 Allotments are becoming increasingly popular nationally, following the recognition of the role that such facilities can play in encouraging all sectors of the community to participate in active recreation.
- 10.4 Changing trends in house building leading to an increasing focus on the development of flats and apartments may also generate an upward turn in the demand for allotments, as residents without access to private gardens seek alternatives.
- 10.5 Evidence suggests that demand for allotments is increasing in Bexley. The Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners brings together representatives of all allotment sites in the Borough and has a good working relationship with the Council. The Federation enables partnership working and knowledge sharing and strives to achieve improvements in the current provision of allotments and encourage more people to participate.
- 10.6 Eight of the current allotment sites in the Borough are under delegated management. A committee of plot holders therefore take responsibility for the day to day running of allotment sites as well as the promotion of the activities of plot holders. Sites operating under delegated management are generally but not exclusively the larger sites.

Strategic context

- 10.7 The Bexley Unitary Development Plan Policy ENV21 focuses on the provision of allotments and states that
- “The Council will review the supply and demand of allotments and rationalise the use of sites where there is a continuing lack of demand or replace them in more suitable locations. If a site becomes surplus to use the Council will assess proposals for alternative use”.
- 10.8 This study will provide an overview of the current and future supply and demand of allotments in London Borough of Bexley.
- 10.9 By their nature, allotments contribute to the protection, creation and enhancement of natural habitats. The council encourages the keeping of biodiversity records at allotments, linked with the biodiversity action plan and aims to make allotments more sustainable.
- 10.10 The Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan also highlights the value of allotments in the protection and conservation of biodiversity and habitats. Key targets of the plan include maximising the sustainability of allotments and encouraging the keeping of biodiversity records at allotment sites. The plan also targets an increase in the uptake of allotments across the Borough.
- 10.11 In 1992, 29% of the 1731 plots available for letting were vacant. Despite a previous reduction of over 300 plots (17%) to meet declining demand, the total number of untenanted plots had still increased to 33% by 2004. Today we have a total of 1512 plots with a total number of vacant plots standing at just over 10%.
- 10.12 This substantial increase in demand is in part credited to the introduction of allotment gardening and vegetable growing to television, with programmes such as Gardeners World with Monty Don, Jamie Oliver ‘At Home’ and Hugh Fernley Whittingstall at River Cottage. According to recent press coverage, these programmes highlighting the benefits of growing your own produce have dramatically increased the demand for allotments. Site-specific promotion by the Allotment Federation has also played a key role in increasing local demand in Bexley.

Assessing local needs - consultation

- 10.13 Consultation specific to allotments was undertaken using a variety of research techniques. Findings of all means of consultation have been used to inform the local standards ensuring they are reflective of local needs.
- 10.14 The Council undertook a full survey of allotment holders in 2007. The findings emerging from this survey have been essential in understanding the views of allotment holders in detail and are integral to the development of local standards. The key issues highlighted by this survey included:
- 55% of respondents to the survey stated the main benefit of owning an allotment plot was for healthy exercise
 - respondents identified the main reason for the renting a plot at their specific site was that it was convenient for home/work (83%) – this highlights the importance of location to plot holders
 - water supply, secure boundary fencing and maintenance of common areas were regarded as essential

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- ancillary facilities regarded as desirable included disposal of rubbish, car parking, toilets, access to maintenance machinery, trading hut, site notices, maintenance of vacant plots and a communal manure store
 - 51% of respondents rated their site as good and a further 28% considered it to be excellent. This highlights an overall level of satisfaction with the quality of provision
 - the location of sites from respondent's homes were split between less than ¼ mile (30%), ½– 1 mile (22%), ¼– ½ mile (22%) and 1 – 3 miles (21%)
 - the most common travel times indicated by respondents were 6 –10 minutes (46%) and less than 5 minutes (36%). Again this reinforces the importance of plots being in close proximity to the home for users
 - 67% of respondents were satisfied with the maintenance of boundaries and fairways at sites
 - 50% of respondents would be prepared to pay a higher allotment rent if maintenance was improved. However, 45% would not.
- 10.15 Consultation with The Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners raised a number of issues similar to those evident within the survey responses. A lack of toilet facilities at sites across the Borough was a common concern and coupled with a higher uptake of women plot holders, provision of facilities was deemed to be an essential improvement. Site security was also an issue. Boundaries on many sites were perceived to be insecure and this compromises the security of all sites.
- 10.16 Maintenance was also deemed to be a challenge if not all of the plots are fully occupied.
- 10.17 Despite the emphasis in the survey that suggests that proximity to the site is particularly important, the workshop session highlighted that many plot holders are willing to travel to access their preferred allotment sites. It was noted that some sites attract residents from all over Bexley and even surrounding Boroughs.
- 10.18 The benefit allotments can play in improving community involvement and social cohesion (eg volunteers) was also highlighted by members of the Federation.
- 10.19 Consultation with local residents was also undertaken in order to understand the views of the general public with regards allotments. The key findings included:
- findings from the household survey indicate a split in opinion regarding the provision of allotments. 28% of respondents feel provision is about right while 26% not enough. The remainder had no opinion
 - the importance of providing high quality allotments is recognised by 60% of residents, who suggest that current provision is only of average or poor quality. 21% of respondents feel that allotments are good quality. This contrasts with the views of allotment holders, who exhibited higher levels of satisfaction with existing provision
 - the majority of residents in London Borough of Bexley perceive the quality of allotments to be average (55%). 35% feel the sites are good and 10% would rate them as poor
 - it was suggested by residents at drop in sessions that the quality of allotments was good across the Borough. Some felt that this was a result of a sense of ownership by plot holders and the work of the Allotment Federation

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- delegated management (Bourne Road, Lesnes Abbey) is perceived to have resulted in a greater focus on maintenance and site quality as a result of the increased involvement of plot tenants
- 63% of respondents to the household survey stated that walking would be the most popular travel method when visiting allotments. The majority of respondents would expect to travel up to 10 minutes to reach an allotment site (57%).

Quantity of provision

10.20 The provision of allotments in London Borough of Bexley is summarised in Table 10.1 below

Table 10.1 – Provision of allotments across London Borough of Bexley

Cluster	Current provision	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (Hectares)	Provision per 1000 of the current	Scenario 1 Provision per 1000	Scenario 2a Provision per 1000	Scenario 2b Provision per 1000	Scenario 3a Provision per 1000	Scenario 3b Provision per 1000
Bexleyheath	3.29	0.09	1.68	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
Crayford	8.54	0.36	2.76	0.42	0.37	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.34
Erith	6.45	0.10	3.17	0.16	0.13	0.13	0.10	0.13	0.09
Sidcup	16.2	0.50	3.55	0.52	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.30	0.32
Thamesmead	4.35	0.13	2.60	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Welling	9.14	0.17	3.32	0.18	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.21
Overall	47.97	0.09	3.55	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.19

10.21 The key issues emerging from Table 10.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of allotments across the Borough include:

- in total, 28% of the population believe that there are about the right amount of allotments in Bexley. However, 26% of respondents were dissatisfied with the amount of provision. Over a quarter of respondents to the household survey didn't have an opinion about allotment provision, perhaps suggesting a lack of awareness or interest in this typology
- the level of provision across the Borough varies when analysing the hectareage dedicated to allotments (the number of sites in each area is relatively consistent). The lowest level of provision is found in the Bexleyheath cluster (3.29 hectares). This is surprising, given that residents in the Bexleyheath cluster portrayed the greatest satisfaction; with 38% of residents stating provision was about right or more than enough. This is perhaps reflective of the perception that the provision of allotments increases demand. In areas where there is a lack of provision awareness may be lower
- Howbury Lane and Elstree Gardens allotments were recently closed and are currently unsuitable for letting. These sites are still designated as allotments and although they are currently unusable, there remains potential for them to be brought back into use. They are therefore included within qualitative analysis

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- provision in the Bexleyheath cluster contrasts with the Sidcup cluster, where there are 16.2 hectares of allotment provision, the highest in the Borough. No other cluster contains over 10 hectares of allotment provision
- the highest level of dissatisfaction was found in the Thamesmead cluster, where 42% of residents indicated that provision was insufficient. Provision in this area is the second lowest of all clusters in the Borough
- the size of sites appears to be consistent across the Borough with all clusters containing allotments of 0.50 hectares or less or 1.5 hectares or greater
- future population projections reveal a decrease in overall provision per 1000 population. There are notable shortfalls in provision per 1000 population in the Crayford and Sidcup clusters. There are slight increases in provision in the Thamesmead and Welling clusters.

Setting provision standards - quantity

10.22 The recommended local quantity standards for allotments have been summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix E. The recommended local standard is reflective of the findings of consultation and is based on the adequacy of the existing provision to meet the needs of the current population. The standard can then be applied to future population projections in order to determine the additional requirement generated by population increases.

Quantity Standard (Appendices E & F)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.22 ha per 1000	0.22 ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>Findings from local consultation identify a greater emphasis on improving the quality, of allotments as opposed to increasing the quantity of provision. The majority of respondents to the household survey and the Allotment User Survey feel the provision of allotments is sufficient. Despite generally positive responses from the Allotment User Survey about the quality of sites, attendees at the Allotment Federation group session and respondents to the household survey raised issues with the maintenance and protection of allotments. Poor maintenance and disregard for some allotments has led to closures in the past and some respondents were keen to make sure this is not repeated.</p> <p>The local standard has therefore been set at the existing level of provision placing an emphasis on the qualitative improvements of this typology and also the protection of allotments. While some allotments have waiting lists, site visits highlighted many sites that currently experience limited use or have recently been closed and could be brought back into use in the event of additional demand. This standard will also enable the identification of any locational deficiencies and combined with the application of the accessibility standard will ensure that residents have access to an allotment within the recommended distance of their homes.</p>	

Quality of provision

10.23 The quality of existing provision of allotments in the Borough was assessed through site visits and is set out in Table 10.2 overleaf. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.

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10.24 The site visits undertaken provide an indicative independent overview of site quality and the facilities available.

Table 10.2 – Quality of provision of allotments across London Borough of Bexley

Cluster	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bexleyheath	6	55%-79%	66%	Church Road (Oldfield Road)	Orchard (Mayplace Road East)
Crayford	6	76%-88%	82%	Crayford Way	Love Lane, Valentine Avenue
Erith	5	21%-82%	50%	Howbury Lane	South Road (Larner Road)
Sidcup	10	35%-85%	70%	Cray Road	Knoll Road, Old Farm Avenue
Thamesmead	6	26%-79%	49%	Elstree Gardens	Lesnes Abbey (r/o Heron Hill)
Welling	7	39%-88%	64%	Station Approach (Welling)	Alers Road (Green Vale)
Overall	40	21%-88%	64%	Howbury Lane	Love Lane, Valentine Avenue, Alers Road (Green Vale)

10.25 The key issues emerging from Table 10.2 and the consultation relating to the quality of allotments are:

- the quality of allotment sites across the Borough is wide ranging, with the lowest quality score being 21% (Howbury Lane) and the highest 88% (Love Lane, Valentine Avenue and Alers Road). With the exception of the Crayford cluster, each cluster exhibits significant variations in the quality of allotments
- the average quality of sites within each cluster also varies, with Thamesmead possessing the lowest (49%) score and Crayford the highest (82%). This shows significant variation in the quality of allotments in each area. The quality of allotments in this area may have impacted upon the opinions of local residents regarding the quantity of provision, as residents in Thamesmead displayed the highest levels of dissatisfaction of all clusters
- site assessments suggest that access, boundary fencing and signage are the key areas for improvement at allotment sites
- boundary fencing was of utmost importance to attendees at the workshop session, with improvements contributing to the look and feel of the sites and also deterring any potential vandals
- site assessments highlighted that larger facilities have greater variation in the level of ancillary accommodation provided – this may influence the scores achieved by individual sites
- some sites do not appear to be fully in use – Leatherbottle, Howbury Lane, Cray Road, Elstree Gardens and Gilbert Road allotments – lack of usage affects the quality of these sites. Both Howbury Lane and Elstree Gardens were closed recently, however they are still designated as allotments and have consequently been included in the audit.

Setting provision standards - quality

10.26 The recommended local quality vision for allotments is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided in Appendix G.

Quality Standard (Appendix G)

Recommended standard	
Based on the calculated quality scores from detailed site assessments all natural and semi natural open space should aspire to achieve a quality score of 79%.	
Essential	Desirable
Good Access	Flowers/Trees
Nature Features	Toilets
Parking Facilities	Clean/Litter Free

The quality of existing sites

10.27 The calculation of the upper quartile quality score (79% on the site assessment for allotments) provides an indication of the desired level of quality at each site and enables a comparison of sites across the Borough. Sites falling into the top quartile are set out in Table 10.3 below. Benchmarking scores can be found in appendix J, enabling comparisons against other types of open space. A full list of site scores can be found in Appendix I.

Table 10.3 – Selection of quality assessment results for allotment provision

Above upper quartile	80%+	(88%) Alers Road (Green Vale) – Site ID 335 (88%) Valentine Avenue – Site ID 506 (88%) Love Lane – Site ID 505 (85%) Old Farm Avenue – Site ID 501 (85%) Knoll Road – Site ID 511 (85%) Rosemary Road – Site ID 487 (84%) Harland Avenue – Site ID 510 (82%) South Road (Larner Road) – Site ID 352
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10.28 The key issues arising from analysis of the quality of allotments include:

- there is a large variation in the quality of allotment sites across the Borough that ranges from sites scoring 21% to 88%
- three of the top six quality allotment sites are located in the Sidcup cluster. However, it also contains two of the five lowest scoring sites suggesting that there is a significant variation in the quality of facilities in this area.
- Alers Road allotments are the highest scoring site in the Borough – achieving 88%.

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 10.29 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations. Cost was not raised as a barrier to accessing allotments, although 45% of existing allotment plot holders indicated that they would not be willing to pay more than the existing tariff.
- 10.30 Site-specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the programme of site visits where information and signage, transport and general issues were assessed.
- 10.31 Consultation and analysis highlights that walking (63%) is the most common travel method when visiting allotments, with 31% preferring to drive. Residents across all individual clusters had a preference for walking to sites, in particular those living in the Sidcup cluster (93%).
- 10.32 The Allotment User Survey suggests that plot holders currently walk to sites, with over 75% of respondents travelling less than ten minutes. 83% of respondents stated that the main reason for using their respective site was due to the close proximity to home or work. Despite travelling on foot, car parking and vehicular access was raised as a key issue at the Allotments Federation session.
- 10.33 The workshop session highlighted the fact that despite the popularity of allotments across Bexley, some sites were not accessible due to over protective plot holders.
- 10.34 The recommended local accessibility standards for allotments has been summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

Accessibility Standard

Recommended standard
15 MINUTE WALK TIME (720m)
Justification
<p>The provision of allotments is very much a demand led typology and this should be reflected in the application of the accessibility and quantity standards. Any deficiencies that are highlighted through the application of the study should be assessed further to indicate whether there is genuine demand in that area.</p> <p>As a guide, a standard has been set at 15 minutes walk time. Residents responding to the household survey and Allotment User Survey indicated that they would expect to walk to allotments and a walk time has therefore been used in line with living a healthy lifestyle and targets to reduce the reliance on private transport. Given the 75% threshold level is for a 15 minute walk (720m), setting a standard at this level is in accordance with the PPG17 Companion Guide.</p>

Applying provision standards

- 10.35 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of allotments and identifying areas where provision may be insufficient to meet local need.
- 10.36 The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine

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where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a much more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately.

10.37 In light of the demand led nature of allotments, consideration of current waiting lists and trends in usage is also important to effectively determine the level of need.

Quantity

10.38 Table 10.4 below sets out the results of the application of the quantity standard to the current distribution of facilities in Bexley.

Table 10.4 – Application of quantity standard

Cluster	Current provision balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 1 Future balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2a Future balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2b Future balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3a Future balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3b Future balanced against local standard (0.22 hectares per 1000 population)
Bexleyheath	-3.86	-4.07	-4.00	-4.01	-4.25	-4.01
Crayford	4.07	3.40	3.02	3.08	2.64	3.08
Erith	-2.65	-4.21	-4.46	-7.09	-4.86	-8.61
Sidcup	9.37	4.72	4.85	5.16	4.40	5.16
Thamesmead	-4.87	-4.06	-3.65	-3.65	-3.65	-3.90
Welling	-2.12	-0.69	-0.63	-0.43	-1.08	-0.43
Overall	-0.06	-4.91	-4.87	-6.94	-6.79	-8.70

Green = above the minimum standard; Red = below the minimum standard

10.39 Key issues arising from Table 10.4 include:

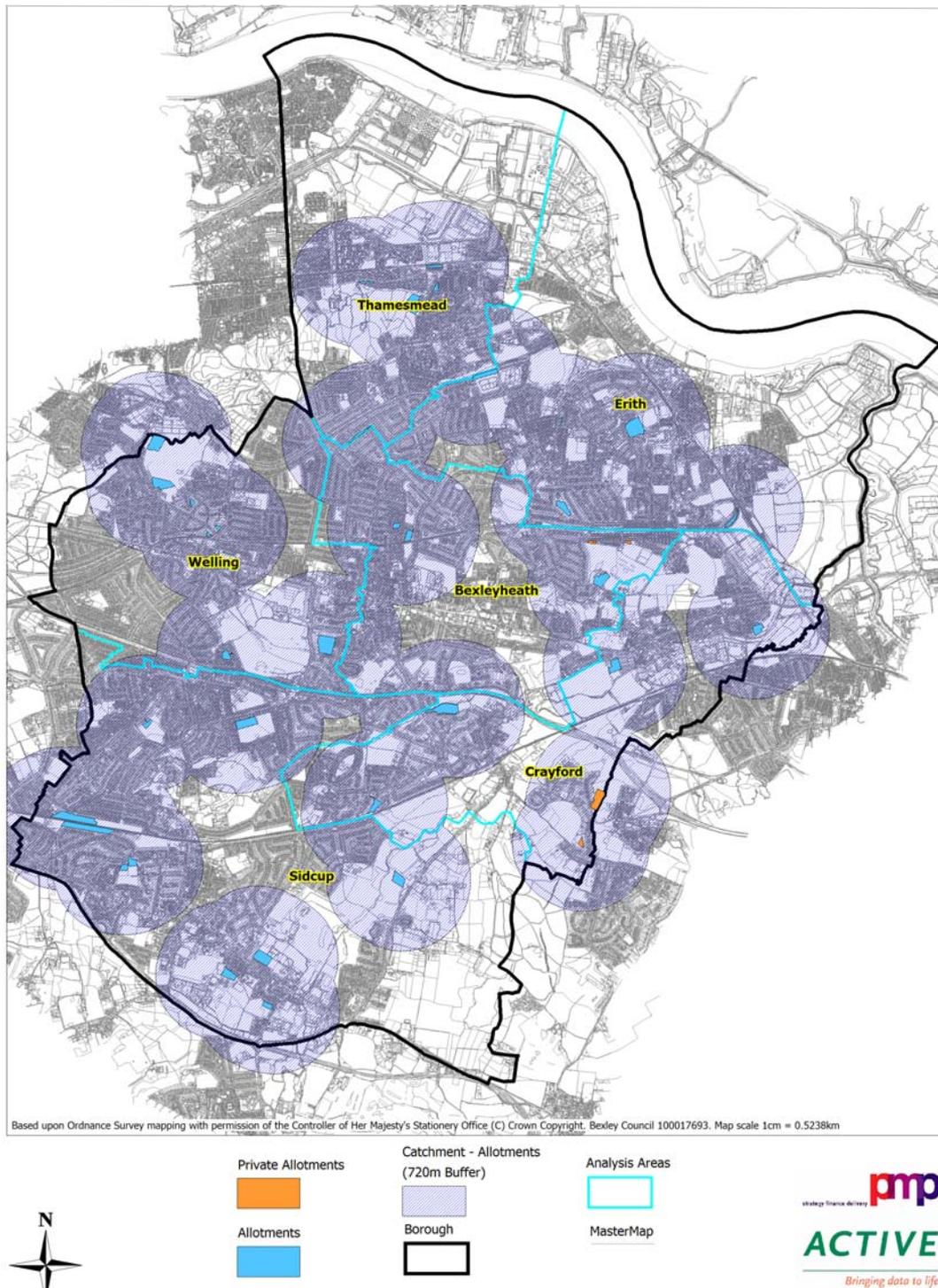
- as discussed, the level of provision across the clusters varies. The lowest level of provision per 1000 population (based on existing figures) is found in Thamesmead, where provision equates to a total of 0.10 hectares per 1000 population. In contrast, the Sidcup cluster has the largest provision of 0.52 hectares per 1000 population
- based on a local standard of 0.22 hectares per 1000 population, all but two (Sidcup and Crayford) of the six clusters currently exhibit a quantitative deficiency. The Sidcup cluster contains the largest site in the Borough - Old Farm Avenue Allotments
- application of the quantity standards indicates that all areas of the Borough are expected to have a shortfall in provision by 2026 with the exception of the Sidcup and Crayford clusters, which will have sufficient provision to meet the recommended minimum standard. This is consistent regardless of which growth scenario is applied
- based on scenario 1 population projections, there will be an overall shortfall of -4.91 ha by 2026. Scenario 2a projections indicate a similar figure, however based

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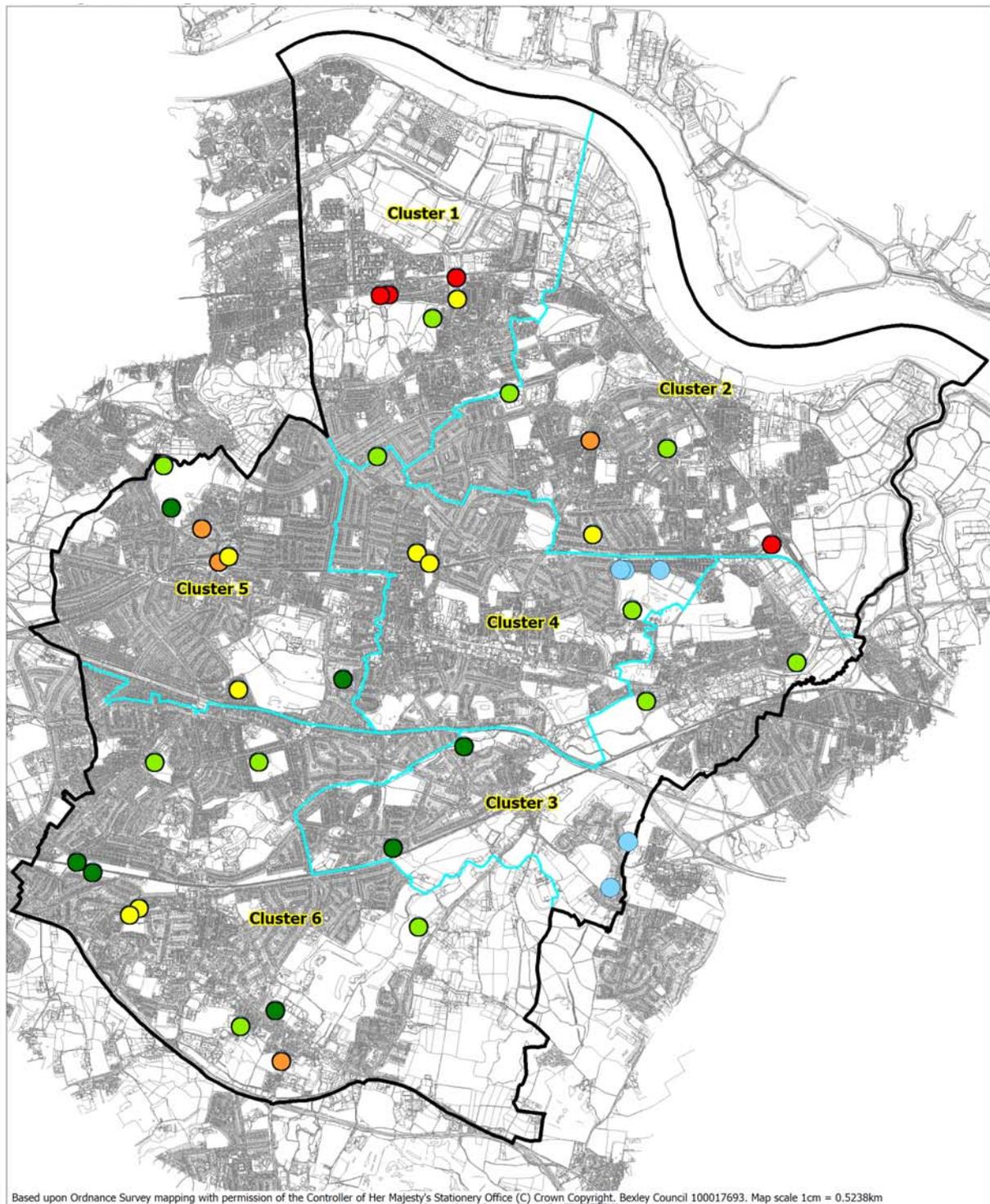
on Scenario 3b this shortfall is expected to increase to – 8.70 ha by 2026, indicating a great increase in the shortfall of supply in relation to the current figure of - 0.06 ha. The undersupply of allotments in the Erith cluster when current provision is considered in the context of growth scenario 3b is particularly large (- 8.61 hectares)

10.40 The application of the local accessibility and quality standards for allotments are set out below in Maps 10.1 and 10.2 respectively.

Map 10.1 – Provision of allotments in London Borough of Bexley



Map 10.2 – Quality of allotments in London Borough of Bexley



Quality % Scores

- 84 to 100
- 68 to 83
- 52 to 67
- 36 to 51
- 20 to 35

Sites with no Quality Score



District



Analysis Areas



MasterMap



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- 10.41 The key issues arising from the accessibility mapping regarding the distribution and quality of sites include:
- although there are small pockets of deficiencies (Welling, Thamesmead clusters), there is an even distribution of allotments across all clusters and the majority of residents are within the recommended catchment of an existing facility
 - consultation highlights the need for a balance between the quality and quantity of allotment sites. The Thamesmead cluster has a clear deficiency in terms of good quality provision in comparison to other areas. With the exception of the Thamesmead cluster, good and poor quality sites are evenly dispersed.

Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards

- 10.42 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas where there is potential unmet demand we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify whether areas are quantitatively above or below the recommended minimum standard and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.
- 10.43 In light of the demand led nature of allotments, application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards should be treated as a starting point only, with detailed research and monitoring undertaken prior to the development of new allotments. This should include the analysis of waiting lists.

ALL1	Continue to regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is improving/increasing and ensure new housing developments allow for any increase in demand as necessary.
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- 10.44 The breakdown of provision in Bexley highlights that only the Sidcup and Erith clusters contain sufficient provision to meet the recommended quantity standard up to 2026 (regardless of the housing growth scenario applied).
- 10.45 Despite this, analysis of waiting lists highlights that while some sites have waiting lists, there are more plots vacant than residents on the waiting lists. It is clear that the facilities at some sites are a particular draw to residents and that they are willing to wait until plots at these sites become available.
- 10.46 Consideration of demand will be particularly important where it is anticipated that there will be high population growth/new development, for example in the Erith cluster.
- 10.47 The level of development in each area and the density of development that takes place will influence the likely future demand. Residents living in properties with no or limited garden space are potentially more likely to desire access to an allotment than those who have access to a vast array of garden space.
- 10.48 Consultation and the resulting local standards highlight the importance of enhancing the quality of allotment provision. Several essential features were highlighted through both the Allotment Federation and the Council allotment survey. The need for qualitative enhancement was further reinforced through the findings of the site visits, which emphasise significant differences in the quality of sites across the Borough.

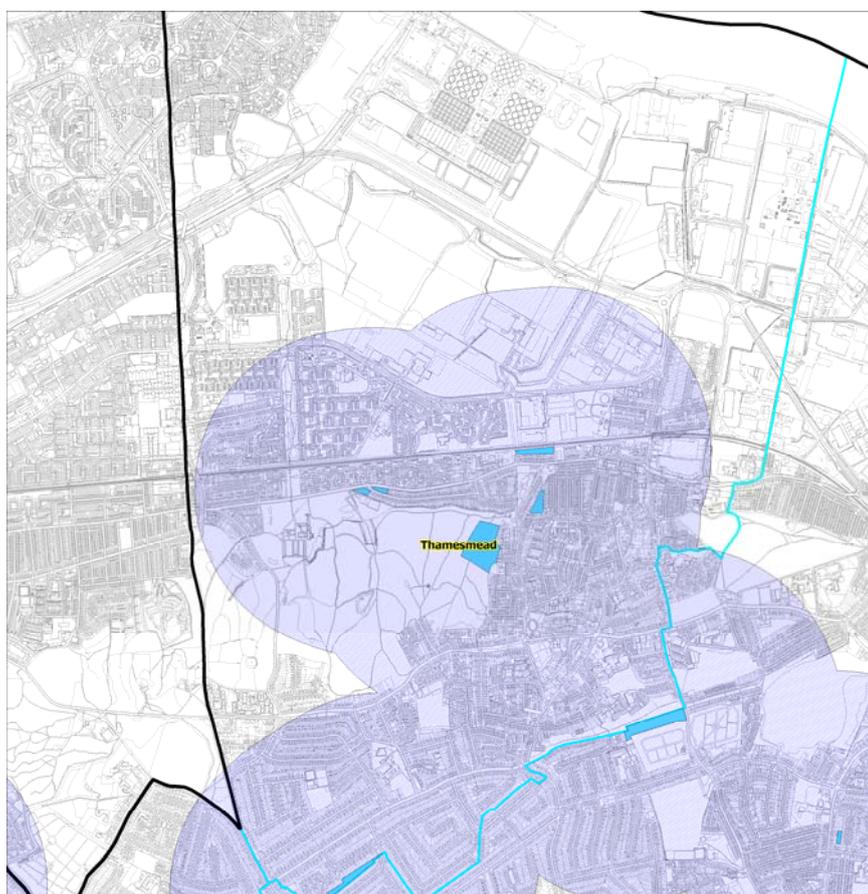
ALL2	Use the quality assessment scores as a baseline for identifying sites that may benefit from future investment and seek to implement the quality standard set. A rolling programme of improvement would ensure that all allotment sites provide basic facilities and are perceived to be adequately secure by plot holders.
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10.49 Consideration is given to the specific supply and demand for allotments in each area of the Borough and priorities are identified.

Thamesmead cluster

10.50 The largest quantitative deficiency is found in the Thamesmead cluster and this is reinforced by the application of the accessibility standards (as shown below in Figure 10.2). This highlights that a substantial proportion of this cluster is outside of the distance threshold for allotments. Further analysis however indicates that a large proportion of this area is non-residential and provision to serve this area is not required.

Figure 10.2 – Area outside of the recommended catchments for allotments



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10.51 Despite a small waiting list at Chapmans Land Allotments in Belvedere, there are other sites with small quantities of vacant plots suggesting that there is no need for immediate new provision. The Elstree Gardens site in Thamesmead is currently closed but is still designated as an allotment. There remains potential for this site to be brought back into use if demand was evident.

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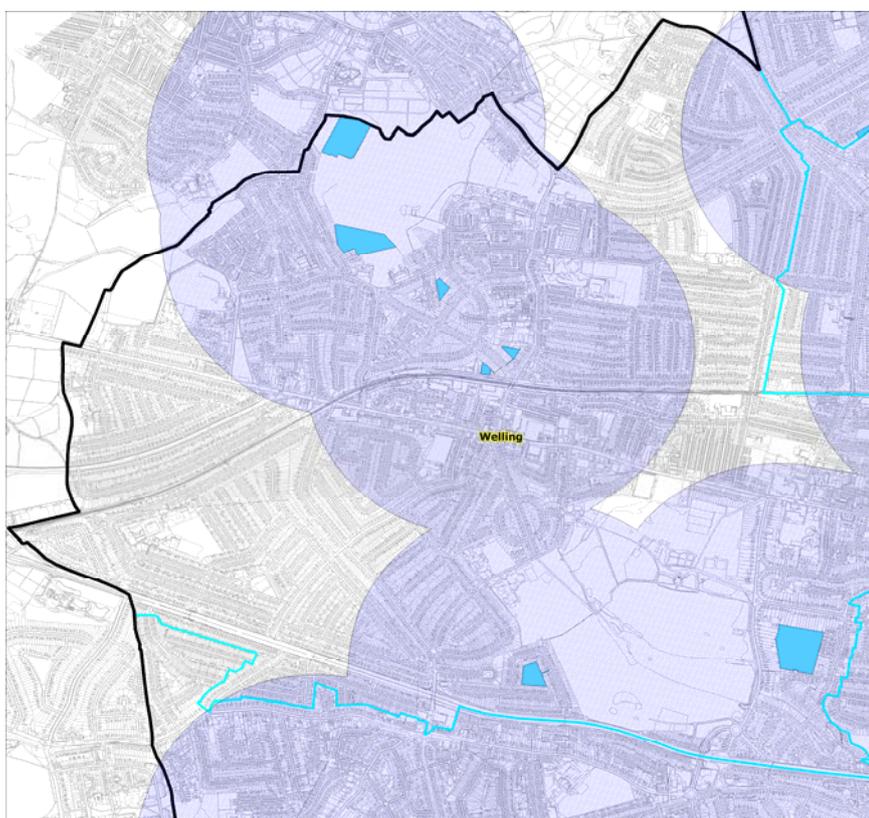
10.52 Quality scores highlight that there is only one good quality site within the Thamesmead cluster and that the overall quality of sites is significantly lower in this area of the Borough than any other. Improvements to the quality of provision in this area should therefore be prioritised over new provision. Availability of plots at sites where there are current vacancies should be promoted.

ALL3	Prioritise the improvement of the quality of sites in the Thamesmead cluster in line with local standards and aspirations.
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Welling cluster

10.53 Additionally, residents living to the west and east of the Welling cluster are also outside of the recommended catchment of a site, although there is a concentration of sites in the North of this area and in the central strip. Many sites serve the same catchment. This is illustrated on Figure 10.3 below.

Figure 10.3 – Area outside of catchment for allotments in Welling cluster



Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Bexley Council 100017693.

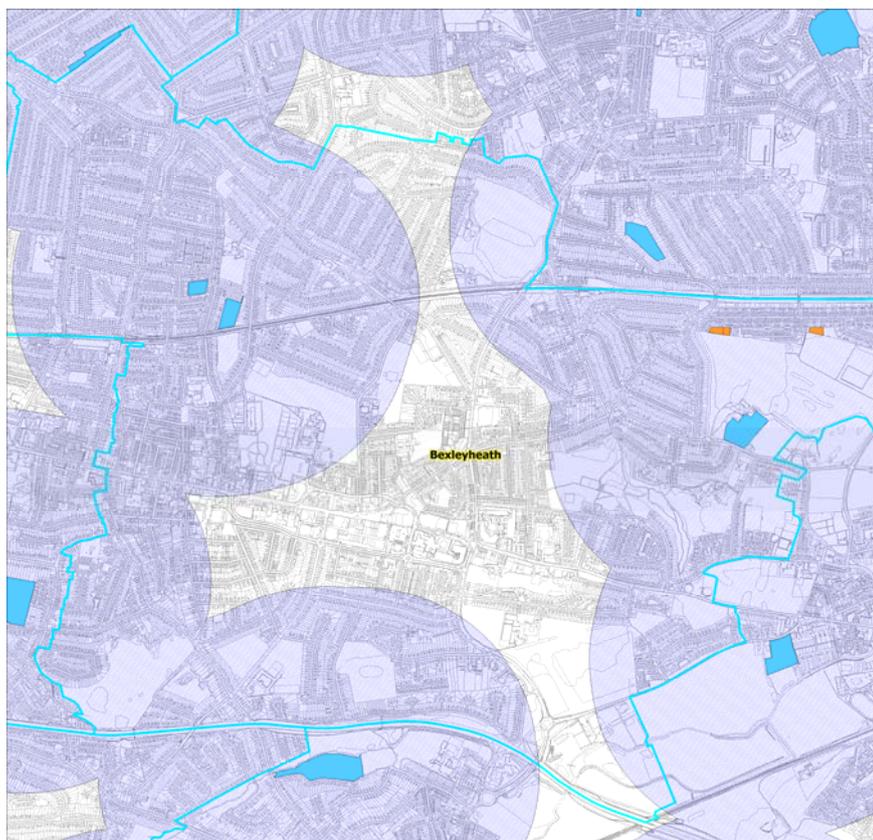
10.54 Application of the quantity standard highlights a deficiency of provision in this area and this is supported by a small waiting list (3) at the Burnell Avenue site. This level of demand is insufficient to warrant new provision and efforts should focus on enhancing the quality of provision and ensuring even take up of all sites.

ALL4	Monitor the demand for allotments in the Welling cluster on an ongoing basis.
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Bexleyheath cluster

10.55 Figure 10.4 below highlights a small area of accessibility deficiency in the Bexleyheath cluster, further reinforced by the application of the quantity standard, suggesting a deficiency in provision of –3.86 ha. Waiting lists in this area are also larger than in other areas of the Borough with 20 waiting at Barry Avenue and 14 at Church Road.

Figure 10.4 – Area of deficiency in Bexleyheath cluster



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10.56 There are limited opportunities for new provision in this area and access to nearby sites should therefore be facilitated through the development of green chains.

ALL5	Facilitate access to nearby allotments in order to maximise opportunities for residents to participate. Continue to monitor the demand in this area on an ongoing basis.
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10.57 Application of the quantity standard suggests that provision is sufficient in the remaining areas of the Borough and this is supported through the accessibility standards, which highlights few further areas of deficiency. While analysis of current demand highlights some sites with waiting lists, other nearby sites contain vacant plots. Priority in the first instance should therefore be to improve the quality of sites to ensure that all sites are desirable to potential plot holders.

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ALL6	Focus on improvements to the quality of existing allotments in the Sidcup and Crayford clusters ensuring that all sites are desirable to potential plot holders.
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10.58 While there appears to be sufficient provision of allotments in the Erith cluster, the Howbury site is currently decommissioned. While there is limited evidence to show demand for the site at the current time, reinstatement of this site may provide an opportunity to meet local needs should either demand increase / and or in the event of population increase. Scenario 1 population projections highlight a substantial increase of just over 10,000 people for the Erith cluster.

10.59 In light of the good distribution of facilities (where allotments serve unique catchment areas), and the high levels of use at the majority of allotment sites, all provision should be protected from development.

ALL7	Ensure that demand for allotments is routinely assessed when considering the implications of planning applications for new development.
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10.60 Allotments can play a key role in increasing levels of physical activity across the Borough, providing an alternative to formal sporting activities. In light of the recognised issues of quality and accessibility with regards allotment provision, approaches to encourage greater access to allotments should be considered. The value of allotments to local residents as a social and health opportunity was emphasised throughout consultation. Increased provision of allotments is likely to be of great importance in future years if trends of increased usage continue.

ALL8	Explore opportunities for improving access to allotments through links with schools and better promotion of sites. Work in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to promote allotments as an alternative source of physical activity.
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10.61 The Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners play a key role in promoting and encouraging the use of allotments across Bexley. Volunteers are also instrumental in their dedication to the day to day running of sites and the future sustainability of allotments in the Borough.

ALL9	Continue to work in partnership with the Allotment Federation and provide support and advice to allotment tenants and delegated site management committees. Support the Federation as they seek to increase the awareness of allotments and promote the use of facilities in the Borough.
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10.62 In addition to promoting and supporting the use of allotments from a recreational perspective, it is essential to capitalise on the opportunities that these sites offer in terms of biodiversity and habitat creation. Allotments are a key feature of the local and regional biodiversity action plan and key targets include ensuring that allotments are sustainable and keeping biodiversity records.

ALL10	Ensure that allotments are developed and managed in a way that promotes biodiversity and conservation.
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Summary and recommendations

- 10.63 There are currently 40 (36 Council owned) allotment sites across Bexley, totalling 47.97 hectares, equating to an overall provision of 0.22 hectares per 1000 population. While supply appears to meet demand (when taking into account waiting lists and vacant plots), investment in quality is considered a priority in some areas.
- 10.64 Results from the household survey show a balance between residents who indicate that there is insufficient provision of allotments across the Borough and those who feel that there is sufficient provision. The Allotment User Survey suggests that there are higher proportions of residents who feel that there is sufficient provision. The quality of sites, particularly with regards toilets, water and secure boundaries.
- 10.65 The quality of existing allotments is significantly varying and therefore quality is a key priority across the Borough. Enhancements should be achieved through partnership working with the Federation and plot users.
- 10.66 The majority of residents indicated that they would expect to walk to an allotment and hence an accessibility standard equivalent to a 15 minute walk has been set. This reflects the expectation for local provision and highlights possible areas of deficiency. Alternative solutions for the future provision of allotments should be explored, particularly partnerships with schools.
- 10.67 The future demand for allotments should be considered in light of the projected population growth.