



ISLINGTON

Allotment Policy

June 2021

Islington Council Allotment Policy

FOREWORD

Islington is the most densely populated Local Authority Area in England, situated in north London. It is an inner city, urban borough with very little public open space.

This places great importance on the borough's green spaces and the role they play in enhancing the quality of life for local residents and visitors.

We wish to implement modern day best practice so that Islington's allotments can sustain increased use, whilst protecting their core function of food production, their ecological importance and the value they bring to educate residents.

The creation of new allotment sites and the management of the existing sites is vital to ensure that they are sustainable and by implementing this policy, we can go a long way to ensuring the allotments are a quality facility for future generations.

1. Introduction

Although the Parks Service is not a statutory service, the provision of allotment plots plays a key part in the Council's agenda to build healthier communities and promote healthy living. There is no statutory minimum or maximum level of service provision, but the Government realises the important role allotments play in the fabric of community life and has outlined its vision in a range of strategies and plans.

The Islington Council Allotment Policy sets the over-arching direction for the service. Allotments are a unique resource and allotment gardening provides opportunity for a year round healthy lifestyle which is active, socially inclusive and which reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being. Like other leisure activities, it provides exercise and mental relaxation, but also provides lifelong learning and fresh fruit and vegetables that support healthy living. Allotment gardening is fundamentally about primary food production.

The benefits provided by allotments are more varied than may at first be appreciated. They obviously address individual and social well-being, by offering physical activity and outdoor exercise, a sense of pride and achievement and the production of good value and nutritional fruit and vegetables. However, allotments have a wider role as well. Allotments form a part of the open space resource of the borough and can be a focus of educational interest and public engagement, neighbourliness and social solidarity. Allotment sites also make a contribution to the important areas of biodiversity and sustainability. It is worth noting that family members and friends often join in with activities on the allotments or share in its produce. The value is therefore not confined to the individual plot holders but spreads outwards in a ripple effect.

They represent an important opportunity for community interaction where social and other boundaries can be overcome. It is imperative that this allotment policy fits in with other Council policies and that shared action can help secure health, leisure, education, sustainability and planning objectives.

Like other categories of public open space in the U.K, there has been a long period of under-investment in allotments. The resulting deterioration in the condition and appearance of sites contributes to the general assumption that allotment gardening is an activity where marginal benefits accrue to a few. A strategic approach is required to counter this decline and to ensure that the benefits of allotment gardening as well as community food growing are properly recognised.

The Council has a Food Poverty Action Plan and through the detailed action plan that supports it, we and our partners are demonstrating our determination to tackle issues of food poverty and to promote the good health of the borough's residents.

The purpose of this Allotment Policy is to guide the management development of Islington's allotments. This policy will be reviewed if there is a substantial change in provision, management or allotment law.

For a borough like Islington with very limited land availability, community food growing may be better at engaging larger numbers of residents in food growing activity, but some sites are better suited for allotments and there is still a very strong demand for food growing plots that can be managed by an individual or their family.

2. Allotment Provision & Management

There are currently five allotment sites in Islington.

Allotment site	No. of plots	Managed by :
Monsell Road	6	Islington Council
Evershot Road	17	Islington Council
Quill Street	23	Islington Council
Pollard Close	27	Islington Council
Arvon Road	32	Arvon Road Allotment Group

At present the Arvon Road site is and will remain separately managed, but in due course it is intended that management of this site will come under the auspices of this Council policy.

The Council is committed to encouraging all sites to have fully constituted groups to manage all the day to day issues.

Policy 1 - The Council will commit to exploring further the option of allotment groups taking on the full management of the individual sites as is the case with Arvon Road.

Local Authorities have a legal obligation to provide allotments to meet demand under section 23 subsection (1) of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908. The municipal authority is under two Statutory and hence mandatory obligations as regards allotments. These are :

1. to provide a sufficient number of allotments
2. to let these to people who wish to take them

However, Inner London Boroughs have a discretionary power to provide allotments under section 55(4) of the London Government Act 1963 as it was understood that the amount of land available was very limited.

The allotments legislation does not lay down minimum standards or a required nature or extent of allotment garden provision. The Government has considered it appropriate that each Local Authority should decide for itself what proportion of its resources to devote to these purposes. Allotment authorities have room to exercise discretion about the level of provision of allotment gardens and facilities on site.

Policy 2 – The annual rent is to be set dependant on the size of the plot but retaining a discount for those over the age of 65

The current charges are below. The charge is reviewed annually as part of the overall review of fees and charges.

Evershot Road – Full plot – approx. 60m² - £93 or £46.50 for concessions
Evershot Road – Small plot – approx. 20m² - £31 or £15.50 for concessions
Monsell Road – Small plot – approx. 20m² - £31 or £15.50 for concessions
Pollard Close – All plots – approx. 20m² - £31 or £15.50 for concessions
Quill Street – Full plot – approx. 40m² - £62 or £31 for concessions
Quill Street – Small plot – approx. 20m² - £31 or £15.50 for concessions

3. Purpose of the policy

The Policy has five broad aims. These are :

- Aim 1 – Manage the demand for allotments.
- Aim 2 – Good administration & management.
- Aim 3 – Promote environmental sustainability and biodiversity.
- Aim 4 – Promote food growing.
- Aim 5 – To increase the amount of land available for food growing

Aim 1 - Manage the demand for allotments

Fixed term allotment agreements

Allotment agreements are given out for one calendar year. They are issued in January and are valid from 1st January to 31st December. Provided that there has not been a breach of the agreement, the annual agreements are automatically renewed.

Re-sizing of existing allotment plots

All the allotments in Islington already fall well below what is considered to be a standard size plot of 250m². The last allotments to be created in Islington were at Pollard Close and these were only approximately 20m², i.e. 10m long by 2m wide. However, they were very well received by the plot holders in that whilst it was acknowledged that they were small, given the time that the plot holders had available, it was agreed that the plots were large enough to provide a considerable amount of produce but not require a great deal of time to manage, especially in regard to watering. It also meant that when a plot holder was, for instance, away on holiday, it was not too onerous a task for a neighbouring plot holder to water or otherwise maintain the plot.

Policy 3 - New plots that become available will be assessed and re-sized as appropriate.

This will not only add to the number of plots available but also make them more manageable in an inner city environment. Since 2010, this has seen the creation of 17 new plots.

Aim 2 – Good administration & management

Tenancies

Policy 4 - When a new plot is made available, the prospective tenant will be asked at that time if a single or joint tenancy is required.

Policy 5 - If a tenants' circumstances change during their tenancy period they can request a joint tenancy.

If a tenant requests a joint tenancy, the Council will look at the circumstances and decide if it is appropriate. If there is to be a joint tenant, that tenant must also be a resident of Islington. Only one such 'succession' tenancy will be granted.

Policy 6 - For existing tenancy holders who are on a single tenancy agreement, should they die or become incapable of managing the plot for whatever reason, their partner or spouse may request that they succeed to the tenancy.

Allotment inspection

A formal inspection regime will be carried out. All plots will be inspected on an approximately quarterly basis to ensure there is adequate maintenance. Should any plots fall below the required standard, the following process will be instigated:-

1. Initial correspondence or meeting with the plot holder to establish any issues.
2. Sending a formal letter warning of the consequences of non-cultivation giving an appropriate timescale in which to bring the plot to the required standard.
3. A final letter confirming that should the plot not be brought up to the required standard, the tenancy will be terminated.

Individual allotment groups

Policy 7 - Fully constituted allotment site groups will be encouraged and supported.

There is already a Pollard Close and Quill Street Allotment group and the aim is to have such a group for each site. The aim is that these groups will carry out much of the day to day management of the site, thereby releasing Officer time and enabling a greater level of self-management.

Aim 3 - Promote environmental sustainability and biodiversity

Environmental Sustainability

As specified in the Letting Agreement, all plots on all sites will be managed completely organically. Water saving measures will be installed at all sites

where appropriate. Solar power will be used instead of mains electricity whenever the opportunity allows.

Biodiversity

Allotment groups will be encouraged to grow a range of food crops and use the communal areas of the sites for appropriate planting to encourage biodiversity.

On-site composting will be promoted on all sites and the use of NLWA compost will be enabled when possible.

Aim 4 – Promote food growing

Along with the allotment sites, the Edible Islington project ensured the creation of a large number of other food growing projects in housing estates, parks and a range of other sites. The Allotment groups will be encouraged to assist with the Council's aim of encouraging further food growing initiatives.

Aim 5 - To increase the amount of land available for food growing

Islington has fewer allotments than any other London borough. When the Pollard Close Allotment Site was created in April 2010 it nearly doubled the number of Council managed plots available but the availability for land for allotments is very limited and the cost to create an allotment site is considerable.

In 2009, the Council set up a scheme called Edible Islington which created a range of community food growing opportunities in schools, housing estates, parks and open spaces. These sites do not fall under allotment law but in many cases provide a better community facility than allotments. The Council is committed to increasing their number wherever possible and in most cases it is both simpler and more effective to create community gardens and other food growing opportunities rather than allotment sites.

4. Waiting List

The waiting list is held in a secure, online location and all changes and correspondence regarding the list are recorded giving a fully audited record.

The Council manage a single waiting list that is used by all the sites except Arvon Road who have their own waiting list. As at April 2021, it had 200 names on it and was subsequently closed for new entries. Given the current provision and the number of plots that become available it is unlikely that the list will re-open for many years.

<p>Policy 8 - The process to open the waiting list will not begin until it has less than 100 names on it and the list will be closed again once it has reached 200 names.</p>
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Given the number of enquiries that the Council receive, and what happened in April 2021 when the waiting list was re-opened, it is expected that the list will be closed again only a few days after re-opening.

The process to open the waiting list has to be fair and transparent. In April 2021, notification that the waiting list was going to open was placed on the Council's web site and within the resident newsletter. Applications were accepted on a first come, first served basis. The exact process will be agreed nearer the time and depend on technologies available at the time.

Policy 9 - There will be a limit of one waiting list place per household.

Policy 10 - No-one under the age of 16 will be able to join the waiting list.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Council

The Council's role includes the following:

- To oversee the day-to-day management of the 4 Allotment sites within the Borough.
- Manage and update the allotment waiting list.
- Showing potential tenants vacant plots.
- Liaise with site representatives regarding site issues.
- Attend the AGM of the Allotment groups if requested.
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- Provide information on any internal or external funding.
- Attend the London Allotment Officers Forum or suitable body.
- Work closely with other departments and partners to ensure the delivery of a quality service.
- Deal with tenant's enquiries.
- Provide the allotment group representative with relevant site information.

The Role of Allotment Group Representative

The site representatives provide a vital link between the Council and its tenants. The site representative works in a number of ways as follows:

- Informing the Council of any site problems.
- Passing on relevant information to tenants.
- Being a point of contact for tenants who may need help or advice.
- Monitor deliveries i.e. compost.
- Advising the Council of tenants who are failing to cultivate/weed their allotment garden, or are otherwise breaking their tenancy agreement.

The Role of the Tenant

The tenant is the person whose name is on the tenancy agreement and whose information is kept with the Council. These are the following responsibilities of tenants:

- Tenants are responsible for anything contained within their plots.
- Access areas must be kept clean, tidy and free from debris, tools etc.

- Compliance with the annual allotment agreement and making the appropriate payment.
- Tenants are responsible for any visitors to their plot.

If tenants are in any doubt and require further assistance they can contact the Allotment Group Representative or the Council, who are more than happy to advise.

6. Other matters

6.1 Tenancy agreement

- The tenancy agreement has undergone a review and a copy of this can be found in the appendices. This sets out the rules and regulations that the tenant must adhere to.

6.2 Insurance

- All sites are covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance; this only covers claims that are deemed to fall under Council's responsibility, i.e infrastructure, including paths and boundary fencing.
- Individual plots that cause damage to neighbouring tenants/residents are covered by the site's third party insurance.
- Personal tools and equipment are the responsibility of the plot holder.
- Site tools and equipment are the responsibility of the Allotment Groups.
- Events are covered by the Council's Insurance. Any events that are to take place must have prior written consent from the Council.
- A copy of the Insurance Policy will be held by and accessible through the appropriate site representative.

6.3 Health & Safety – Responsibilities

- The Council will seek to ensure that only safe practices are being carried out.
- Any works that the Allotment Groups wish to carry out must be approved by the Council.
- It is the tenant's responsibility to keep their children (under 16) under constant supervision and not left to roam the site or enter other tenant's plots.

6.4 Events/Open Days

- All sites will be encouraged to promote allotment use through annual open days.
- Allotment Groups will encourage allotment tenants to volunteer their services for such events.
- The Council will support these events as required, i.e. advertising and photo copying of leaflets/flyers.

6.5 Accessibility

- The Council will make any reasonable adjustment to a site or a plot to ensure that accessibility is not a bar to anyone holding an allotment plot.
- Where possible, raised beds will be created to further increase the accessibility of food growing.

Amendments from original Policy

Date	Subject	Change

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