

Briefing Sheet 4 - Community Right to Build Project

Wider Impact on Allotment Sites

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Does the project set a precedent for other allotment sites?

Note: This specific briefing sheet covers only the wider context of use of allotment land, not the impact on individual allotment tenants, the allotment growing centre or other issues raised by the project.

A NUMBER OF ALLOTMENT TENANTS and residents have asked whether using an acre of allotment land for the Long Leys Village Centre sets a precedent for the development of other allotment plots in Lincoln. In simple terms, the answer is no, as there is already an established national process with strict protocols explained in the 2014 government publication: '[Allotment disposal guidance: Safeguards and alternatives](#)'. These national protocols have been used at least twice by City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) and can be used again in the future without any need for further precedent.

SECRETARY OF STATE APPROVAL is required. Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 states – “Where a local authority has purchased or appropriated land for use as allotments the local authority shall not sell, appropriate, use or dispose of the land for any purpose other than use for allotments without the consent of the Secretary of State”. To obtain this consent a number of strict criteria must be met. These are:

- That adequate provision will be made for any allotment holders displaced.
- There are surplus of allotment plots.
- The number of people on the waiting list has been effectively considered.
- The implications of disposal for other relevant policies, in particular local plan policies, have been considered.
- National Allotment Society (NAS) guidelines on allotment provision are met.
 - 20 plots or 0.5 hectares per 1,000 households.

LLRA has suggested to CoLC four ways to meet the criteria and allow the Village Centre project to proceed. One that provides the biggest overall benefit would be for CoLC to deliver on its 2012 allotment policy of providing plots within 10 minutes walk of people's homes (embracing the 20-Minute Neighbourhood planning approach).

CURRENT PROGRESS on CoLC's 2012 allotment policy is that three of the eleven wards in Lincoln still have no allotment provision and fail the CoLC policy test of a 10-minute walk:

- Birchwood, Glebe, Minster.

A further three wards have a significant under provision and also fail the CoLC policy test:

- Abbey, Hartsholme, Park.

LLRA's assessment is that circa 380 allotment plots need to be added, primarily to wards in the southwest and northeast of Lincoln, to meet both NAS guidelines and CoLC's 10-minute walk policy. The Western Growth Corridor project provides a good opportunity to address at least part of this.

See Appendix D (page 24) of the published project outline for a full breakdown by ward which also assesses shortfalls against the more ambitious CoLC policy of providing 27 plots per 1,000 households.

Forcing those living in other parts of Lincoln (and Lincolnshire), particularly from deprived areas, to take unnecessary car journeys to grow food on Long Leys allotments because there are no sites near their homes is incompatible with CoLC's Climate Emergency Declaration made in July 2019. The ward shortfalls are not addressed in CoLC's Vision 25 document. Nor is there any CoLC analysis of how many homes fall within the “10-minute walk” policy.

LLRA is working with other partners across Lincoln, such as Lincolnshire Food Partnership, to lobby for this policy shortfall to be addressed. There are also local parish councils (such as Saxilby) that currently have no allotment provision at all.

38 ALLOTMENT PLOTS on the Long Leys Road site have been leased, for more years than most of us can remember, on an agricultural tenancy basis to a long-standing Long Leys farming family. LLRA have good relations with the farm, which grows primarily wheat and beet, working together to successfully address the fly tipping issues at the A46 underpass.

There is a clear inconsistency between this tenancy and the status of the land, that LLRA feels needs to be resolved by CoLC with the farm. CoLC owns other land, currently unused for agriculture, around this area that could be used to provide an overall solution. Returning the 38 plots to allotment cultivation would also help the 7 residents currently on the Long Leys Road waiting list. Listening to the farm's knowledgeable views on required land drainage improvements would also be a good move.

PREVIOUS successful approaches to the Secretary of State were made by the city council to use allotment land for other purposes:

- Long Leys Road site 1962
- Ermine site (Minster ward) 2016

Long Leys Road Site 1962



Photo: SEC building circa 2006

AN ACRE OF LAND was provided to Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) to build a Social Education Centre (SEC) in 1962. Geoff Tann's excellent book, "Lincoln's Allotments: A History" summarises it as:

- *"The City Council agreed a request in 1962 for an acre of land from the site for an Adult Training Centre. The Lincoln Federation of Allotments minutes for June 1962 record that their members suggested other allotment sites be considered instead, but they were in favour of training huts being erected."*

The SEC building was used for around 50 years for training purposes, community meetings and as the Long Leys polling station. LCC eventually considered it surplus to requirement and the building was knocked down. Despite community protests, that the land should be retained as a potential site for a village hall, the land was sold, and Cloverleaf Care Home opened in 2019.

Today the Long Leys polling station is a portacabin and is placed on Albion Crescent green each May for local elections.

WHO BENEFITED?

Sales receipts went to LCC so council taxpayers across Lincolnshire benefited. Recognising the loss of a community asset, LCC also retained £75,000 of the sale price on behalf of the Long Leys community to partially fund a replacement meeting place. The intention is to use this money as part of the Village Centre project, to assist with the community hub and community gardening / growing centre elements.

Ermine Site 2016

21 UNUSED PLOTS ON THE ERMINE site were disposed of in 2016. The plots had been allowed to fall into a poor state due to budget cuts and would incur cost to reinstate to a reasonable condition. Reportedly there was little demand for plots on this unmaintained site. The disposal occurred after consultation with North Lincoln Horticulture Society, who acted in the absence of an allotment association on the site.

WHO BENEFITED?

THE PROCEEDS OF THE SALE were partially used to benefit the Long Leys community, with an upgrade to facilities on the Long Leys Road and Burton Ridge allotments in 2018. New security fencing was added, water supplies installed and improvements to drainage were made. As well as Long Leys, allotment sites elsewhere in the city had similar improvements.

In addition, the 21 plots lost in Minster ward were replaced in 2020 with 28 smaller plots at a new site at Melbourne Road in Hartsholme ward, which previously had no allotment provision. Each new plot is of 175 m² (8.75m by 20m). These could best be described as half plots and probably a more realistic size for most tenants to manage.

LONG LEYS PLOT COMPARISON

As a comparison, a typical Long Leys Road full plot has an area of around 350 m², sufficient in theory to grow enough food to feed a family of four for a year. Whilst there are a number of allotment tenants who cultivate an area this size, to do this requires about two or three months of full-time work. For most time-poor families, especially those new to growing, half plots (or in LLRA's view quarter plots) could be appropriate.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS, when underway, is anticipated to last well into 2023 and will gain input from all stakeholders to allow the project to be defined in detail.

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IF YOU WOULD LIKE to discuss this project, or maybe volunteer to get more involved then contact LLRA by email: LLRA@long-leys.org.