

Allotments

Introduction and definition

- 10.1 This typology includes all forms of allotments. 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 in addition to their primary purpose. These include:
- bringing together different cultural backgrounds
 - improving physical and mental health
 - providing a source of recreation
 - making a wider contribution to the green and open space network
 - providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation.
- 10.3 Allotments are becoming increasingly popular nationally, following the recognition of the role that they can play in encouraging all sectors of the community to participate in active recreation. Allotments offer an alternative active pastime to participation in formal sport, particularly for older residents. Many residents in the district acknowledged the recreational benefits associated with using an allotment.
- 10.4 Changing trends in house building, with an increasing focus on flats and apartments may also generate an upturn in the demand for allotments, as residents without access to private gardens seek opportunities to participate.
- 10.5 This section considers the quality, quantity and accessibility of allotments across Bromsgrove.
- 10.6 The key issues for allotments arising from a review of strategic documents are set out in Table 10.1 overleaf.

Table 10.1 – Strategic context – regional and local

Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Bromsgrove Local Plan	<p>Policy RAT4 covers the retention of open space, stating that the Council will seek to retain and enhance all public and privately owned open space of recreational and amenity value.</p> <p>Policy RAT9 protects allotment sites from development indicating that development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that demand does not justify retention or adequate replacement allotments are provided.</p>	<p>This study will consider the supply and demand of allotments in the district and provide evidence to inform decisions on the protection of allotments and the creation of new allotments.</p>
Blueprint for Bromsgrove - a Local Agenda 21 Action Plan for the District	<p>An objective of the open space, countryside and wildlife theme is to ensure allotment land remains in leisure use.</p>	<p>This study investigates the current and future demand for allotments and will identify the quality and quantity of allotments that are required to meet the needs of the population now and in the future.</p>

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- 10.7 Analysis of the current provision of allotments across the District is set out below.

Watt Close Allotments, Bromsgrove



Quantity of provision

- 10.8 There are 12 allotment sites located across Bromsgrove equating to 15.28 hectares. Eight of these sites are owned by the District Council.
- 10.9 There are currently waiting lists at all of the council owned sites. The largest waiting lists are found at Rigby Lane (38) and Stoke Road (38). In total, there are 146 residents on the waiting lists for the Council's allotment sites.
- 10.10 The quantity and distribution of allotments across the district is summarised in Table 10.2 below.

Table 10.2 – Provision of allotments across Bromsgrove

Analysis area	Current provision (hectares)	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bromsgrove North	0.35	1	-	0.35	12,575	0.028
Bromsgrove West	2.78	4	0.17	0.99	14,154	0.196
Bromsgrove East	0.00	0	-	-	10,429	0.000
Bromsgrove North East	0.00	0	-	-	12,706	0.000
Bromsgrove Central	12.15	7	0.15	3.85	48,192	0.252
Overall	15.28	12	0.15	3.85	98,056	0.156

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10.11 The key issues emerging from Table 10.2 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of allotments include:

- the distribution of allotments across the district is poor, with the majority of sites located in Bromsgrove Central - unsurprisingly the highest provision per 1000 is found in Bromsgrove Central (0.252 hectares) which is where the majority of sites are located
- findings from the household survey reveal that the majority of respondents to the household survey feel the provision of allotments is insufficient (47%). 26% of residents state that there are enough allotments
- within the individual analysis areas a similar perception is evident and the greatest level of dissatisfaction is located in Bromsgrove North East, where 71% of residents indicated provision was insufficient
- there are no allotment sites in Bromsgrove East and Bromsgrove North East – this corresponds with perceptions regarding the quantity of allotments in these areas
- current waiting lists indicate there is waiting lists at all Council owned allotments in the District. The greatest waiting lists are found at Rigby Lane Allotments (38) and Stoke Road Allotments (38). This reinforces the view that there is insufficient provision to meet local need
- the recreational opportunities allotments provide for elderly residents in Bromsgrove were widely recognised by residents. General comments from respondents to the household survey emphasised the need to protect allotments from development and highlighted the community benefits this type of open space provides. The general consensus from residents was that there was a lack of allotments in Bromsgrove, particularly in Alvechurch. Many residents commented on the need to increase the provision of allotments in the district.
- the main focus of the allotments user group discussion session was on the quality of allotments, however, a number of comments regarding the quantity of allotments were received. Although allotment users were aware of large waiting lists at a number of sites in Bromsgrove they stated that plots were available on their sites. It was perceived that inaccurate waiting lists and that unusable allotment plots was a key issue
- a perceived lack of provision of allotments was evident from respondents to the elected members questionnaire.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 10.12 The recommended local quantity standard for allotments has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised overleaf Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix F.
- 10.13 The standard recommends an increase on the existing level of provision. This is based on the existing waiting lists in addition to expressed demand from local residents. In light of comments made by allotment users with regards the need to ensure that allotments are useable it will be important to balance increases to the quantity of provision with improving the quality of existing sites.

Quantity Standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.17 ha per 1000	0.19 ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>A standard set slightly above the existing level of provision is recommended to address the demand for increased provision of allotments in Bromsgrove. Clear levels of dissatisfaction with the current provision of allotments were evident throughout consultation and current waiting lists highlight a level of demand for allotments in the district.</p> <p>Setting the standard above the current level of provision will allow the Council to focus on increasing provision in areas of deficiency, but also consider the enhancement of the quality of allotments, which was a key theme raised by allotments users.</p>	

Current provision - quality

- 10.14 The quality of existing allotments in the district was assessed through site visits undertaken by an independent consultant and PMP. Full details of all the scores achieved can be found in Appendix I.
- 10.15 The quality scores achieved in PMP site assessments are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation. Those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being particularly important determinants of quality have been weighted higher to ensure that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score achieved. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.
- 10.16 The key issues emerging from site assessments relating to the quality of natural and semi natural open space are:
- PMP site assessments reveal that the quality of allotments is good, with the average quality score of a site being 72%
 - site assessments undertaken by an independent consultant support this perception. The maintenance of allotments is considered to be excellent

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- Roundhill Allotments is identified as a high quality site that has undergone recent improvements.

10.17 The key issues emerging from consultation relating to the quality of allotments include:

- respondents to the household survey feel the quality of allotments in Bromsgrove is average (40%). A further 22% feel the quality of allotments is good while 20% state the quality is poor. These varying views suggest that the quality of sites is uneven across the district
- findings within the individual analysis areas mirror the district wide response, with the majority of residents stating the quality of allotments is average. The greatest level of satisfaction is found in Bromsgrove West, where 28% of residents feel the quality of allotments is good
- allotment users discussed maintenance issues at allotment sites across the district. The maintenance of allotments was highlighted as being poor and required a more pro-active rather than re-active approach. Specifically, poor quality paths and rubbish were identified as key issues
- users of allotments stated that a lack of investment had been the cause of current quality issues and that if regular maintenance was provided, a number of issues would be resolved. Security issues were also identified as a key issue, with all representatives highlighting the security of sites as poor
- Parish Council respondents stated that the quality of allotments in Bromsgrove was poor. Specifically, within the parish of Cofton Hackett allotments were highlighted as being overgrown
- it is clear therefore that there are discrepancies between the quality of sites at the time of site visits and the perceptions of users, particularly with regards maintenance.

Setting provision standards – quality

- 10.18 The recommended local quality standard for allotments is summarised below. Full justifications and consultation for the local standard is provided within Appendix G.
- 10.19 The quality standard summarises the features that residents consider to be an important determinant of the quality of provision.

Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – ALLOTMENTS		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Good access	Parking facilities	
Footpaths	Toilets	
Clean and litter free	Seating	
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to allotments, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and Safety		4
Cleanliness and maintenance		3
Vegetation		1
Ancillary accommodation		2

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 10.20 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing opportunities for all people to use the sites. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
- 10.21 Site-specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits and information and signage, transport and general accessibility issues were assessed.
- 10.22 Consultation and analysis highlights that 64% of residents expect to walk to their local allotment while 27% prefer to travel by car. This indicates that allotments are expected to be local to the home.

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- 10.23 Site assessments indicate that access to allotments is good. Entrances are considered to be clean and well maintained. This contradicted with the opinions of some current users of allotments.
- 10.24 The recommended local accessibility standard for allotments is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

Accessibility Standard (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
15 MINUTE WALK TIME
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. As such any deficiencies that are highlighted through the application of the study should be assessed further to indicate if there is any demand in that area.</p> <p>Consultation highlights a clear preference for walking to allotments in Bromsgrove and therefore a walk time has been set.</p> <p>Current waiting lists of 146 people highlights the need for an increase in the provision of this type of open space and the application of the quantity and accessibility standards will enable the identification of areas of existing deficiency, allowing the Council to identify priorities for increased provision. The sufficient provision of allotments in the district will provide an alternative form of recreation and physical activity for residents. The 15 minute walk time provides an indication of existing deficiencies but ensures that the standard is realistic and enables the strategic location of allotments across the district.</p>

Applying provision standards

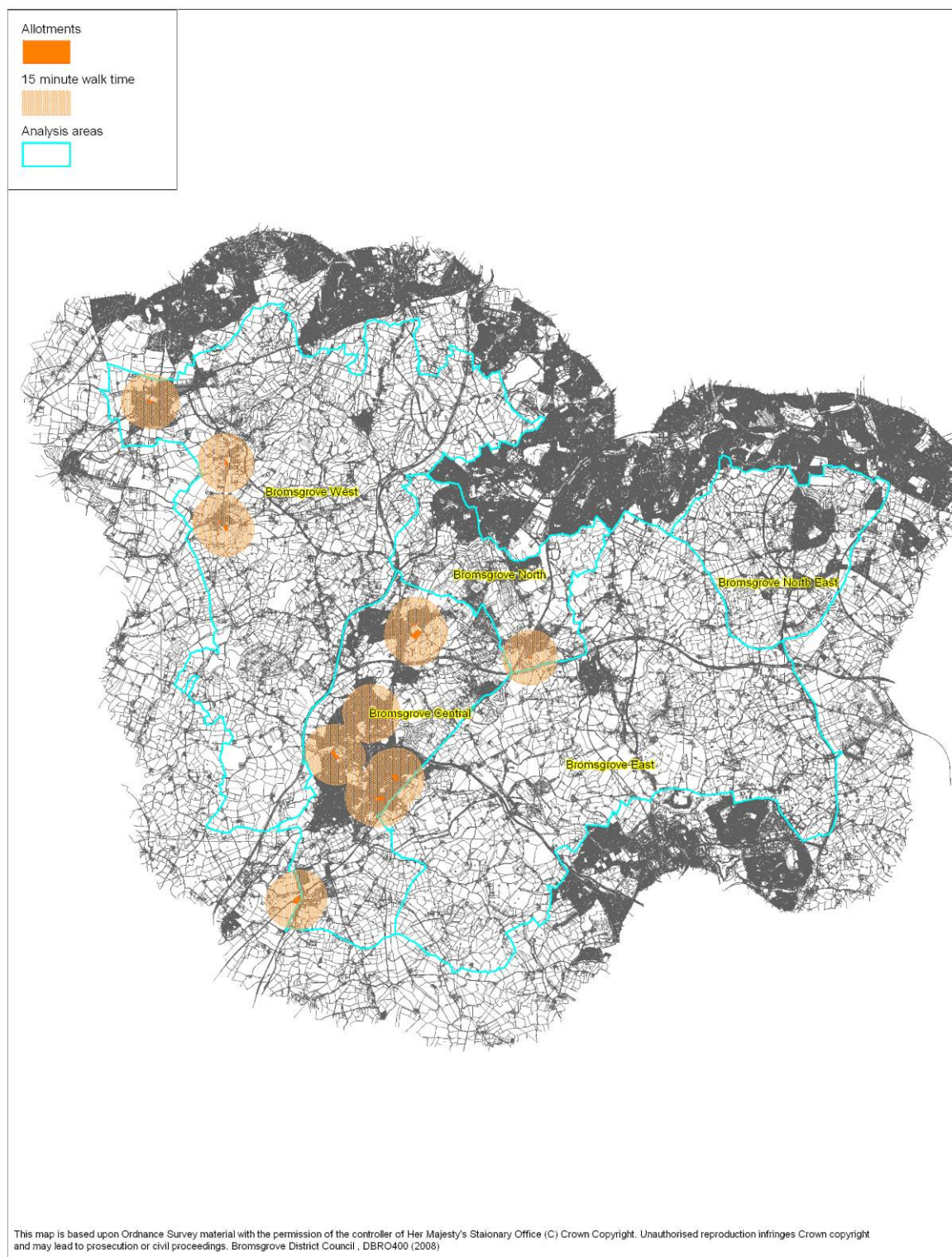
- 10.25 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards provides an understanding of the existing distribution of open space sport and recreation facilities and identifies areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 10.26 Table 10.3 below sets out the results of the application of the quantity standard against the current distribution of allotments.

Table 10.3 – Application of quantity standard

Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (0.19 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (0.19 hectares per 1000 population)
Bromsgrove North	-1.79	-2.04
Bromsgrove West	0.36	0.09
Bromsgrove East	-1.77	-1.98
Bromsgrove North East	-2.16	-2.41
Bromsgrove Central	3.94	2.99
Overall	-1.41	-3.35

- 10.27 Table 10.3 shows that:
- within the district there is currently a shortfall of 1.41 hectares. Based on future population projections this deficiency of allotments is set to increase to 3.35 hectares by 2026
 - only Bromsgrove West and Bromsgrove Central have sufficient provision to meet current and future demand. It is within the Bromsgrove Central area of the district where the current provision of allotments is highest
 - the greatest current and expected shortfall is found within Bromsgrove North East, with an under supply of 2.41 hectares is expected by 2026. There are no allotments located in this area of the district.
- 10.28 The application of the local accessibility and quality standards for allotments is set out overleaf in Map 10.1.

Map 10.1 – Provision of allotments in Bromsgrove



Allotments - 15 minute walk time



10.29 Map 10.1 illustrates that deficiencies are evident in all areas of the district. No residents in Bromsgrove North East have access to an allotment and the majority of residents in Bromsgrove East, Bromsgrove North and Bromsgrove West are outside the recommended accessibility catchment of an allotment.

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

10.30 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.

10.31 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. Detailed research and monitoring of local demand should be undertaken prior to the development of new allotments. Consideration of existing waiting lists is a particularly useful indicator of latent demand.

10.32 In addition, in many instances, the presence of an allotment site will stimulate demand. In areas where there is no provision, the need may be invisible. The demand for allotments will also depend upon the type of housing in an area.

ALL1	Regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is increasing through ongoing evaluation of waiting lists. Ensure new housing developments contribute to any increase in demand as necessary. Evaluation of demand should consider demand in areas where allotments are not currently provided as well as monitoring the usage of existing sites.
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10.33 The breakdown of provision across the District has previously revealed that based on the application of the quantity standard, only Bromsgrove Town has sufficient provision to meet current and future needs and large deficiencies can be found in all other areas of Bromsgrove.

10.34 Recent waiting lists (2007) indicate that there are currently 146 people on the waiting list for an allotment plot in Bromsgrove. This equates to 21% of the current provision of allotments. Internal consultation with the Council’s allotments officer further highlighted the high level and increasing demand for allotments in the District. Parish Council plans further emphasise the importance of allotments, particularly in the more rural areas of Bromsgrove.

10.35 In light of the shortfalls of allotments across the District and the high levels of use at all allotment sites, all provision should be protected from development through the Local Development Framework.

ALL2	Ensure that allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework and provide ongoing support to local providers.
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- 10.36 As revealed, the quantity standard promotes the development of additional allotments in line with the unmet demand that is already evident within the district. While the creation of new sites will be important, significant issues with regards the quality of existing sites were also raised.
- 10.37 Although site visits suggest that the quality of allotments is good overall and that maintenance was adequate, users indicated that a pro active approach was required and that safety improvements were also needed. The quality of allotments is particularly important if the wider benefits of sites are to be realised and if other sectors of the population (for example women and elderly residents) are to be encouraged to use sites.

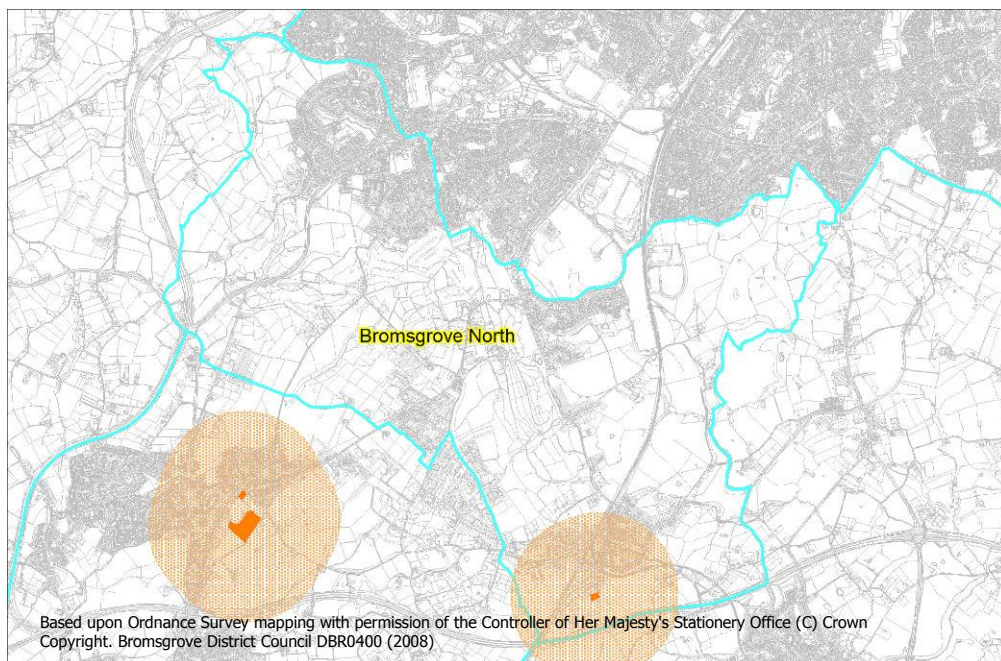
ALL3	Develop a structured maintenance programme at allotments building on current good practice and promote a proactive approach. This programme should be derived from both the findings of the site assessments as well as the views of users and should consider maintenance, security and the provision of appropriate ancillary facilities.
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- 10.38 Demand in each of the geographical areas of the District is evaluated in the sections that follow. In some instances, extension of existing sites (or reduction in the size of plots to accommodate more residents) may provide an appropriate alternative to the development of new sites.

Bromsgrove North

10.39 Application of the quantity standard reveals that there is a current shortfall of 1.79 hectares of allotments in this area of the District. Future population projections indicate that this shortfall is expected to increase to 2.04 hectares by 2026. The majority of residents in this area of the District unable to access an allotment within the recommended 15 minute walk time (figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1 - Deficiencies of allotments in Bromsgrove North



10.40 Based on future population projections there will be a requirement for 82 allotment plots in this area of the District (average size of an allotment plot = 250m²). The only allotment site (Hewell Road Allotments) in the area is located in the south of Barnt Green. Residents in Rubery are therefore outside of the catchment area for allotments.

10.41 Considering the location of this town, just outside Birmingham, and the high density of housing in this area, the provision of allotments may be particularly important to local residents. The development of a new allotment site in Rubery should therefore be considered.

ALL4	Investigate demand and consider the provision of a new allotment site within Rubery.
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Bromsgrove West

10.42 Although application of the quantity standard indicates there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand, accessibility mapping illustrates a number of areas of deficiency within Bromsgrove West. In particular, there are deficiencies in the east of Hagley, Clent and Romsley (figure 10.2).

Figure 10.2 – Deficiencies of allotments in the east of Hagley, Clent and Romsley



- 10.43 Existing waiting lists for Council owned sites indicate there are seven residents on the waiting list for Pool Furlong Allotments. The Hagley Parish Plan identifies that although the provision of allotments in the area has increased the demand for allotments has never being so strong, with current waiting lists at all sites.
- 10.44 In consideration of the demand for increased provision of allotments in Bromsgrove West, the Council should consider the provision of a new allotment site in this area of the District.
- 10.45 Due to the nature of Clent being made up of a number of hamlets and the low population of Romsley, particular consideration should be given to Hagley, where there is currently a high level of demand for allotments in the village. Green linkages to local villages included Clent and Romsley should be provided.

ALL5	Investigate the demand for allotments in Hagley. Any new provision should be located in the east of Hagley.
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Bromsgrove East

- 10.46 There are no allotments located within this area of the district and accessibility mapping reveals all residents in Bromsgrove East do not have access to an allotment within the recommended 15 minute walk time. Application of the quantity standard further highlights this deficiency, with a shortfall of 1.98 hectares expected by 2026.
- 10.47 The expected shortfall of 1.98 hectares is equivalent to 79 allotment plots. In light of this large deficiency consideration should be given to the provision of a new allotment within Bromsgrove East. New provision should be located within the larger settlements of the area, such as Alvechurch. It may be that several small sites in some of the larger settlements would better meet the needs of residents than one large site.

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10.48 Green linkages should be developed to facilitate access to sites for local residents.

ALL6	Consider the provision of a new allotment site within Bromsgrove East. New provision should be located in the larger settlements of the area.
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Bromsgrove North East

10.49 Similar to the findings within Bromsgrove East no allotments are located within Bromsgrove North East. The largest expected shortfall in the district is located within this area (2.41 hectares) and accessibility mapping illustrates all residents are outside the accessibility catchment of an allotment.

10.50 The future expected shortfall within this area is equivalent to 96 allotment plots and therefore the Council should consider the provision of a new allotment within this area of the district. Due to the rural nature of this area of the district, any new provision should be located in Wythall, one of the largest settlements in this area. Alternatively, provision of two to three smaller sites spread out across the North East of Bromsgrove may better meet the needs of local residents.

10.51 Linkages to any new allotment site for those residents outside of the catchment for current sites should be considered.

ALL7	Consider the provision of a new allotment site within Bromsgrove North East. New provision should be located in Wythall or split between the larger settlements of the area.
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Bromsgrove Central

10.52 The highest provision of allotments is located within this area of the district and application of the quantity standard reveals that there is sufficient provision of allotments within this area of the district to meet current and future demand.

10.53 Despite this, accessibility mapping highlights a poor distribution of sites with all residents in Finstall and the majority of residents in Stoke Prior unable to access an allotment (Figures 10.3 – 10.4).

Figure 10.3 - Deficiencies of allotments in Finstall

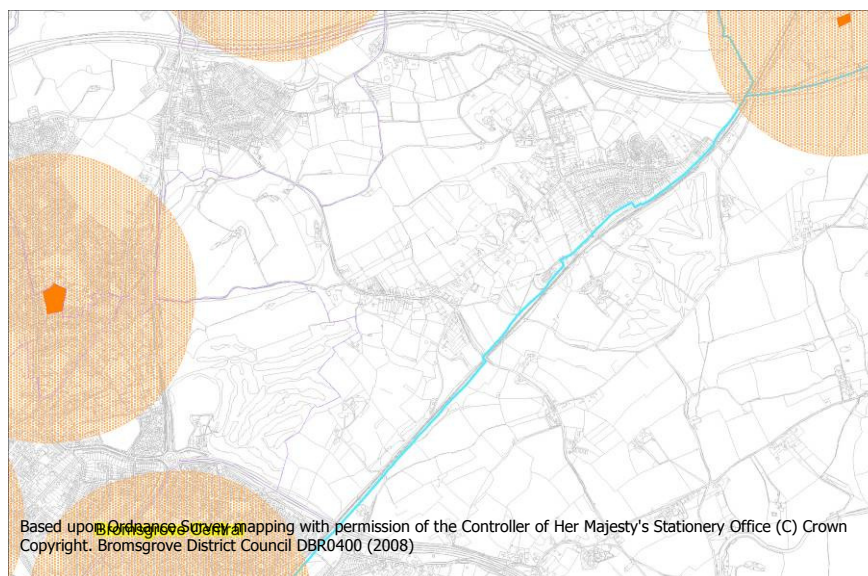
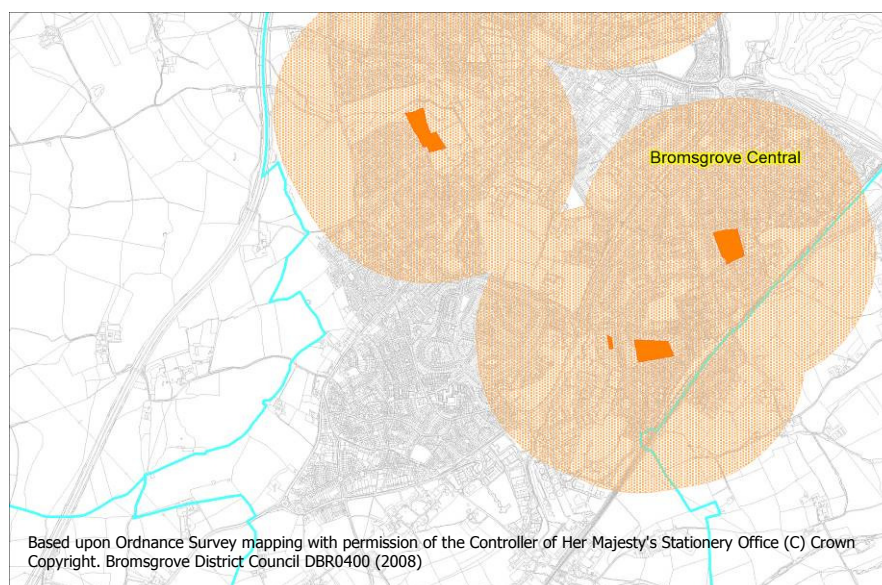


Figure 10.4 - Deficiencies of allotments in Stoke Prior



10.54 Although based on the application of the quantity standard, there is sufficient provision to meet demand, current waiting lists for site in this area equate to 141 people, with the greatest waiting lists found at Rigby Lane (38) and Stoke Road (38).

10.55 Consultation with allotment users suggested that a number of allotment plots at sites are unmaintained by current plot holders and are therefore unusable. This was reinforced by the Council.

10.56 In light of the adequate quantity of provision in this area of the district, in the first instance the focus should be on improving the quality of existing sites and ensuring that all plots on site are usable. Given that the quantity of provision is above the minimum standard, the Council should seek to address unmet demand in the first instance through the reduction in plot sizes.

- 10.57 In the event of ongoing unmet demand, or increases in demand, a new site should be provided in one of the areas of deficiency.

ALL8	Evaluate the existing management practices of allotments in Bromsgrove Central and investigate opportunities to provide half plots in order to accommodate more residents. In light of the large waiting lists at sites in this area, identify opportunities to provide additional sites. Given the distribution of the existing sites, new provision should be located in areas of deficiency.
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Summary and recommendations

- 10.58 There are currently 12 allotment sites across Bromsgrove, totalling 15.28 hectares and equating to an overall level of provision of 0.174 hectares per 1000 population. All Council owned allotment sites have waiting lists and it is evident from Parish Plans, consultation with allotment users and the Council's allotments officer that demand for allotments is increasing.
- 10.59 Findings from the household survey indicated a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current provision of allotments in Bromsgrove, with 47% of residents stating provision was insufficient.
- 10.60 The majority of residents indicated that they would expect to walk to an allotment, hence an accessibility standard equivalent to a 15 minute walk has been set. This reflects the expectation for local provision.
- 10.61 The quality of allotments was perceived to be average by respondents to the household survey. Allotment users emphasised poor maintenance at allotments, with rubbish and poor footpaths identified as the main issues. Good access, good footpaths and clean and litter free were identified as the essential features of allotment site. Despite this, site visits indicate that the quality of allotments in the district is good although there are some areas for improvement.
- 10.62 The current distribution of allotments across the district is uneven, with the majority of sites located in Bromsgrove Central and Bromsgrove West. The application of the recommended local standards highlights deficiencies in all areas of the district except Bromsgrove Central. Even in Bromsgrove Central all sites contain waiting lists and there is ongoing unmet demand.
- 10.63 The key priorities for improving the provision of allotments over the Local Development Framework period therefore include:
- regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is increasing through ongoing evaluation of waiting lists. Evaluation of demand should consider demand in areas where allotments are not currently provided as well as monitoring the usage of existing sites
 - ensure that allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework and provide ongoing support to local providers
 - investigate demand and consider the provision of new allotments within Rubery, east Hagley, Bromsgrove East and Wythall

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- evaluate the existing management practices of allotments in Bromsgrove Central and investigate opportunities to provide half plots in order to accommodate more residents. In light of the large waiting lists at sites in this area, identify opportunities to provide additional sites. Given the distribution of the existing sites, new provision should be located in areas of deficiency.