

Focus of allotments on land in sheffield tourism essay



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Allotments gardens are a familiar and ubiquitous feature of the British landscape (Crouch, D. 1997) and an important one, particularly during the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign during World War II which saw people grow their own produce to boost their food supply.

However, despite the recent surge in demand for allotments, in the past few decades’ allotment numbers have been in decline. With the awareness of climate change and the importance of environmental sustainability, increasing food prices and challenges to stereotypes about allotment growers, have all contributed to large waiting lists for allotments in many areas (‘Can you Dig it’, 2009). Nationally, there are approximately 158, 796 allotments in England across 323 councils, with a total of 94, 124 people on waiting lists (NSKAG, 2010). It should be noted that these national figures appear to account only for local authority allotments and do not include private allotments (Lords debate in Hansard, 2004).

Allotments in Sheffield

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners suggest that there should be a minimum of 15 plots per thousand households (or 1 plot for every 65 households). For York (both City Council and other providers) there are 40 plots per thousand households. Other authorities compare the number of plots per thousand populations, which means that York with 9. 8 plots per thousand populations compares well with Bristol 11. 9, Sheffield 6. 7 and Liverpool 4. 2 plots per thousand populations. (York CC, 2006)

Locally in the borough of Sheffield, there are 3, 305 allotments across 76 sites and 210 private allotment sites (Sheffield City Council, 2010) with the

overall waiting list for plots now at 2, 646 (BBC, 2010). Prime site examples include Heeley/Meersbrook, Carfeild Farm Community Garden and Heeley City farm allotments. During 2009, Sheffield Council created one new allotment site which was brought into use in the Burncross extension. The total area of new land, approximately, 1, 680m², included 14 new plots each measuring 120m². (Sheffield Council, 2010). Potentially, five new sites could be developed by the council under the 'Community Food Growing' scheme.

These include plots at Ecclesfield Park, Lane End in Chapeltown, the Old Jessops Hospital site, Page Hall and parkland at Parson Cross – all of which are currently derelict or overgrown (BBC, 2010).

All this is a positive move towards the current state of council allotments in meeting this surge in demand, yet could this be solved much more easily?

Are allotment plots in Sheffield currently being used to their full potential?

Are all plots currently cultivated, unused, or just simply abandoned?

In a response to questions about the take-up of allotments, Mike Taylor (Sheffield Councilor) stated that there were around 500 plots in the City that had not been let and that the popularity of allotments was dependent upon their location because most tenants wanted a plot, which was near to their home. (Sheffield County Council, 2006).

In a survey of allotment performance (Appendix A) conducted in 2005, it stated that there was a total of 3, 257 plots, with 2, 631 active tenancy, leaving 626 vacant. At the time, there was a waiting list of 435. Surely this could be solved by filling the abandoned sites?

Key allotment sites included Bowstead, with 36 plots, yet 31 vacant, Hagghouse in the south-west with 144 plots and a colossal 126 vacant. The same with Rivelin Valley which has 255 plots and nearly half are vacant. There is currently no up-to-date list in this area, and upon further investigation this data could be required and recorded efficiently.

Vacant plots appears to be an issue and could clearly help towards alleviating the potential demand. Perhaps self-management will help to keep vacant sites down and enable allotments to become more productive?

No sites owned by Sheffield City Council were self-managed and there had been no request from any allotment site tenants or society to take responsibility for a site. The only past experience of such an initiative was at the Rustlings Road site, but this had subsequently been returned to the Council because of management and administrative difficulties. (Sheffield County Council, 2006)

Community groups in the city like Grow Sheffield, Green City Action, Heeley City Farm and Sheffield Wildlife Trust have already said they are interested in managing and developing an area of land for food growing. (BBC, 2010)

This paper sets out to examine and explore the different models by which people are working the land in Sheffield and to offer a comparative and transferable data source to indicate why there is a high demand, yet so many unproductive sites through:

The use of GIS software to map out allotments within Sheffield in order to create a database of existing sites and their uses, examine the spatial

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layouts of allotments, commenting on their successes, and/or failures, and offering design solutions to remedy such findings such as plots too big/manageable

Offer solutions towards more productive allotment sites, identifying uncultivated plots.

Semi-structured interviews with allotment holders and key informants.

Offer ideas towards potential future sites.

Literature Review

Allotments

The term “ allotment” is defined in the Allotments Act 1925 as “ an allotment garden, or any parcel of land not more than five acres in extent cultivated or intended to be cultivated as a garden farm, or partly as a garden farm and partly as a farm.” An “ allotment garden” is defined in the Allotments Act 1922 as an allotment not exceeding 40 poles (or 1, 000 square metres) which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of fruit or vegetables for consumption by himself and his family, and this definition is common to all the statutes in which the term occurs. An “ allotment garden” is what people commonly mean by the term allotment, that is a plot let out to an individual within a larger allotment field. Local authorities’ duties and powers now in general only extend to allotment gardens.

In the late 1940s there were 1. 4 million allotments. Popularity was high due to World War II and the ‘ Dig for Victory’ campaign which encouraged people

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to grow their own food. In the 1980s and 1990s, plots were sold off by councils around the country primarily due to lack of demand. Today an insufficient supply of about 200, 000 allotment plots remain. (LV, 2009)

This loss of sites and plots now poses a problem as demand for allotments has rocketed. The publicity and interest generated by TV chefs, such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, has helped encourage people to want to grow their own vegetables.

The urban allotment has been described by commentators as “ both a sought-after commodity and an essential social accessory” (Miller, A, 2008). Harrods recently offered a £300 consultation on how to create an allotment and offered a team of experts to come and develop a plot from £1, 000. (Osborne, H, 2007) Even the Queen recently turned a part of the garden in Buckingham Palace into a vegetable patch to provide a variety of home grown produce to the palace kitchen (Davies, C, 2009)

The economic downturn, rather than suppressing demand, has fuelled demand, leading one academic to claim that the outlook for allotments has rarely looked so promising (Wiltshire, R). The rising costs of living and increased food prices have led to a new call for allotments as people look at ways to save on household costs. A recent survey showed that allotment owners saved around £950 a year by growing their own produce (LV, 2009).

The number of those interested in the idea of an allotment is thought to be approximately 6 million, illustrating the potential scale of demand (LV, 2009). This demand is only expected to grow in the coming years as a result of social and environmental pressures. According to a report from the <https://assignbuster.com/focus-of-allotments-on-land-in-sheffield-tourism-essay/>

Department of Communities and Local Government, ' The need for allotments, community gardens and urban farms is likely to rise with the growth of interest in organic farming and as a result of rising housing densities and the consequential reduction in the size of many gardens.' (DCLG, 2002)

The increasing mismatch between supply and demand for allotments is demonstrated by the rapid increase in waiting lists over the past decade. In 1996 waiting lists totaled around 13, 000 but by 2008 the total was estimated to be around 100, 000 (NSLAG, 2009). Waiting lists in one London borough are estimated to be as long as 40 years (LV, 2009). Waiting lists in some areas have grown so long that the local authorities have closed them – leading to a systematic under-assessment of the true demand (LGA, 2008)

This information coupled with the sum 500 (Sheffield County Council, 2006) sites not let within Sheffield proves startling even with Sheffield set at 287 hectares for allotments (CIPFA Returns, 2005/6) showing the city as a comparator with the core cities (figure 1) and therefore forms the basis of this research paper.

In addition, allotment sites should be strategically located close to demand and as far away from known sources of contamination as possible, such as old railways, bomb sites and some industrial brownfield sites (Perez-Vazquez, 2000)

Allotment size needs to take account of its intended purpose: therapeutic, hobby or recreational, commercial, self-consumption or mixed purpose.

Allotments are considered by many people as a leisure activity rather than as a means for growing food (Thorpe, 1975)

The Benefits of Allotments

Allotments bring a number of benefits to both individual gardeners and the wider community. Over 70% of the population believes that spending time in their gardens is important for their quality of life (National Trust, 2009). Yet many people, such as flat dwellers, are frequently denied a space to garden and grow their own fruit and vegetables. To prevent exclusion from the opportunities that those people with gardens enjoy, allotments are a vital resource.

Evidence from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners shows that the average allotment site has up to 30% more wildlife diversity than a typical urban park. In Solihull, for example, most allotment sites are associated with adjacent public open space making them part of important wildlife corridors, linking areas of green space within the urban environment. (Warwickshire Government. 2005)

The House of Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee which examines the expenditure, administration and policy of Government in these areas – recently stated that ‘ Consumers will need to think more about the impacts of the way their food is produced, and that the Government will have to encourage them to do so. A formidable task, but it will be rendered less formidable if consumers are engaged with the concept of food production in the first place (House of Commons, 2009). Allotments help

achieve this goal by reconnecting people with the food that they eat through actively involving them in the process of food production.

There are a wide ranging set of important educative benefits of allotments, particularly for schools or children's groups to visit and learn. Educating children of the importance of healthy food and environmental sustainability is now considered to be an important role of local authorities and schools. Eighty per cent of the population are reported to believe that children should learn growing and gardening at school (National Trust, 2009). Brighton and Hove City Council have proposed that under the Sustainable Communities Act food growing is introduced as part of the national curriculum, either on or off school sites (Brighton and Hove Council, 2009).

At the UN's ' World Food Security' conference in 2008, the UN announced that, to cope with rising demand, food production would have to increase by 50% by 2030. The Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee's paper, ' Securing Food Supplies up to 2050: The Challenges faced by the UK', considered how the UK should respond. It concluded that production in allotments and gardens would have benefits for the security of food supplies (House of Commons, 2009). Following this report, Environment Secretary Hilary Benn has called for a ' radical rethink' on how the UK produces and consumes its food. As a part of this, producers, supermarkets and consumers were invited to suggest how a secure food system should look in 2030 (Kinver, M, 2009). We believe allotments could play an important part in this new future for food; producing readily accessible and easily accessible produce.

Allotments have multiple benefits, some direct and more obvious, others more tangential but no less important. What is clear is that there is a compelling case for them and their expansion, but the story of allotments is one of demand outstripping supply

Allotment Policy

The allotments legislation has a long history, some of which originates from the Nineteenth Century Enclosure Awards. The present legislative provisions are contained in the Small Holdings and Allotment Acts 1908 and the Allotments Acts 1922-1950. These place an obligation on allotment authorities to meet the demands of local residents wishing to cultivate allotments and to make provision for the acquisition, management and control of allotment sites.

Geographical Information Systems

GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing feature events on earth. GIS technology integrates common database operations, such as query and statistical analysis, with maps. GIS manages location-based information and provides tools for display and analysis of various statistics, including population characteristics, economic development opportunities, and vegetation types. It allows us to link databases and maps to create dynamic displays. Additionally, it provides tools to visualise, query, and overlay those databases in ways not possible with traditional spreadsheets. These abilities distinguish GIS from other information systems, and make it valuable to a wide range of public and private enterprises for explaining events, predicting outcomes, and planning strategies.

GIS has a remarkable capacity to capture, manipulate and analyse spatial referenced data in order to display the result within a map or graphs.

Moreover this technology can create links between various databases to assist a decision-making process.

The application of GIS technology within Landscape Architecture

Asche & Schreiber et al. investigated the use of GIS in environmental science and in landscape planning in Germany (Asche/Schreiber et al. 1999) and they came to the conclusion that all working-fields of landscape planning can be selectively accompanied by the use of GIS.

GIS has become of increasing significance for environmental planning, landscape planning and environmental impact studies in recent years. The main reason for this is the need, in Environmental Planning, to compare a great number of area-related data describing the affected natural resources and their sensitivity related to the effects of impacts. GIS can be used to couple area-related data with their attributes that represents a highly efficient instrument for such planning tasks and one of common use that is transferable to allow others to view/use and to allow for further research.

Methodology

This research paper has been chosen a type 1, investigative dissertation.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used in order to gain an insight into the topic and allow for further investigation.

A range of methods will be drawn upon in order to gather the required data.

These will involve initial data gathering through feasibility studies and

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interviews plotting the outcomes on allotment site locations. This information will be recorded using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Secondary source material (online data such as MAGIC, CLG, DCMS, DEFRA, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield University resources) and site visits will also be utilised.

All data gathered from participants will require special precautions to ensure that it is stored appropriately.

Data gathered will be mapped using computer software applications such as Geographic information Systems (GIS) as a mode of analysis and representation. This provides a means of visualising and interpreting landscape data for studying changes in forms and functions.

Analysis of design and planning documents as well as literature review of secondary source material with an in depth study on the current condition of each site through the use of observation and photography will be involved within the research.

Practical requirements will involve travelling to each destination within Sheffield through either bus, tram or by private car.

Ethical Approval

The nature of this research area will require ethical approval. There will be considerable human participation through the use of interviews and questionnaires to allotment holders, groups and communities and possibly interaction with on-site allotment managers/Sheffield Council in order to gain access to each individual site.

Timetable

Task

Action

Deadline

1

Literature research – Finding out further information on the chosen topic, with up-to-date resources.

End of Decemeber

2

Gathering of initial data on allotment sites in Sheffield through interaction with County Council and observation techniques, plotting exact locations, sizes, plot numbers, plots used/unused/abandoned.

Early January to late April

3

Analyse data gathered.

Late January to late April

4

Semi-structured interviews with allotment holders and key informants.

Early April to Late May

5

Further analysis of data gathered. Mapping of data within GIS.

Early May to Late May

6

Further literature research, data gathering and analysis.

Early May to Late June

7

Dissertation first draft.

Early June – Early August

8

Dissertation second draft.

Early August to Late August

9

Dissertation hand-in.

Early September

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Population

Hectares

Expenditure 2005/06

Income

Net Spend

Net Spend per Head

of Population

Gross

Spend

Per

Hectare

Net

Spend

Per

Hectare

£ ' 000

£ ' 000

£ ' 000

£

£

Birmingham

992, 100

285

473

72

401

0. 40

1, 660

1, 407

Bristol

391, 500

108

150

103

47

0. 12

1, 389

954

Leeds

719, 000

NA

74

22

52

0. 07

—

—

Manchester

432, 500

NA

NA

—

—

—

—

—

Sheffield

512, 500

287

115

61

54

0. 11

401

188

Bradford

477, 800

NA

73

48

25

0. 05

—

Leicester

283, 900

115

58

21

37

0. 13

504

322

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Heeley City Farm Organic Food Growing

Sheffield Allotments & Home Gardens Federation

Grow Sheffield

Highcliffe Community Allotments Association

Norfolk Park Community Allotment

Tinsley Community Allotment

Women's Allotment Group in Firth Park

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Appendix A – 2005 Sheffield Council

NAME OF SITE

NO OF PLOTS

NO OF TENANCY

VACANT PLOTS

WAITING LIST

WATER

AREA

PANEL

Archer Lane

98

98

0

66

Y

Sharrow/Nether Edge/ Broomhill

Ash Street (Mosborough)

1

0

1

0

N

South East

Birley Moor Drive

3

1

2

3

N

South East

Birley Moor Way

6

4

2

1

N

South East

Bolehill Quarry

15

15

0

1

Y

Netherthorpe/

Hillsborough

Bowstead

36

5

31

0

N

Darnall

Brushes

25

15

10

3

Y

Brightside

Burncross

19

19

0

15

Y

North

Corker Bottoms

60

47

13

1

Y

Manor/Castle/

Woodthorpe

Crimicar Lane

4

4

0

0

N

South West

Crookes Marsh Lane

40

40

0

30

Y

South West

Crookes Quarry

35

35

0

9

Y

South West

Ecclesall

15

15

0

15

Y

South West

Edgefield

11

11

0

1

Y

Sharrow/Nether Edge/ Broomhill

Elm Crescent (Mosborough)

11

6

5

0

N

South East

Ferncroft

7

6

1

0

N

South East

Finchwell

28

26

2

0

Y

Darnall

Francis Fields

17

17

0

26

South West

Grimesthorpe

104

104

0

3

Y

Burngreave

Grimesthorpe Rd

9

7

2

1

N

Burngreave

Hagg House

144

18

126

0

Y

South West

Hagg Lane

162

157

5

9

Y

South West

Handsworth Crescent

2

0

2

0

N

Darnall

Hangingwater

94

93

1

55

Y

Sharrow/Nether Edge/ Broomhill

Harris Road

22

22

0

1

N

Hillsborough/ Netherthorpe

Hawthorn Avenue (Stocksbridge)

3

3

0

0

N

North

Heeley Common

24

19

5

2

Y

Park/Heeley

High Wincobank

85

34

51

1

Y

Brightside

Highcliffe Road

107

99

8

1

Y

South West

Hinde House

20

6

14

0

Brightside

Hinde House Lane

14

7

7

0

Y

Brightside

Holberry Gardens

20

20

0

6

Y

Sharrow/Nether Edge/ Broomhill

Hollinsend

23

17

6

0

Y

South

Hollinsend Rec

10

5

5

0

N

South

Junction Road (Woodhouse)

2

2

0

0

N

South East

Lamb Croft

37

32

5

2

Y

South East

Longley

7

3

4

0

N

Southey/Owlerton

Manor

74

27

47

0

Y

Manor/ Castle/ Woodthorpe

Mauncer Drive

8

8

0

0

Y

South East

Meersbrook

413

400

13

4

Y

Park/Heeley

Meetinghouse Lane

1

1

0

0

N

South East

Moor Crescent

3

0

3

0

N

South East

Morley Street

163

158

5

4

Y

Hillsborough/ Netherthorpe

Morley Street Gas

39

27

12

0

Y

Hillsborough/ Netherthorpe

Moss Way

82

55

27

0

Y

South East

Norton Lees

56

53

3

8

Y

Park/Heeley

Norton St Pauls

22

21

1

9

Y

Park/Heeley

Norwood

61

54

7

4

Y

Southey/Owlerton

Old Haywoods

9

9

0

1

N

North

Ouse Road

27

18

9

0

Y

Darnall

Oxley Park

9

9

0

2

N

North

Park Rifles

34

32

2

3

Y

Manor/Castle/

Woodthorpe

Plumbley Lane

30

27

3

1

N

South East

Reignhead Farm

34

34

0

6

Y

South East

Richmond

12

11

1

1

N

South East

Rivelin Valley

225

101

124

4

Y

Hillsborough/ Nethertho