



NADCAA

Newton Abbot & District Co-Operative Allotment Association

Newton Abbot & District Community Plan 2022 – 2032

Submission Re - Allotment Provision

Dear Mr Rowe,

In response to the request by NATC for people to **"have their say"** on the Local Plan 2022-2032, the Management Committee of the Newton Abbot & District Co-operative Allotment Association (NADCAA) would like to bring the following to the attention of the Town Council's Allotments Sub Committee and the NATC Outreach Team.

History

NADCAA has been running allotments for Newton Abbot Town Council for over 100 years now. Of the eighteen allotment fields that NADCAA managed in 1921 only five remain.

At the end of WW1, the population of Newton Abbot was just over 18,000 and there were 18 allotment fields. After WW2 demand for allotments dropped, many fell into disrepair and were eventually swallowed up by local developments.

Today the population is just over 26,500 people and there are currently five allotment fields.

Since 2000 demand has been on the increase with waiting lists in Newton Abbot at one time reaching 150 names with all plots on all five fields occupied, that level has remained constant through to the present day.

NADCAA currently manages five allotment sites for the Town Council and has a wealth of knowledge gained over the last 100 years of running allotments in Newton Abbot. The main purpose of this document is to highlight a large shortfall in allotments in the Town, a shortfall which unless changes are made to the local plan, is only going to get worse. We also want to bring important global information to the attention of the Town Council.

With demand rising, we need more allotment sites for the following reasons –

- An increase in people wanting to grow their own food.
- A move to "Urban Horticulture" due to people trying to reduce their carbon footprint.
- The "Cost of Living" crisis which is driving more people (especially those on low incomes) to grow their own food.
- People needing somewhere to improve their mental and physical health as we emerge from the pandemic.
- The war in Ukraine which is going to mean food shortages Worldwide.
- The serious state of the soil we need to grow commercial crops across the globe.

We have all become accustomed to the expression "box ticking", therefore here are just some of the boxes that allotments tick -

Good For Your Mental Health	☒
Good For Your Physical Health	☒
Helps Reduce Your Carbon Footprint	☒
Home Grown Crops Have No Single Use Plastic Packaging	☒
Good For Wildlife	☒
Sustaining Our Pollinating Insects	☒
Chemical Free Organic Food	☒
A Community Spirit	☒
Good for the Environment	☒
Contributes to a Sense of Wellbeing	☒

After 30 months during which the world and the way we live our lives has changed dramatically, the importance of allotments, has never been greater, as you can see they tick all of the boxes.

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Carbon Footprint Reduction

Teignbridge District Council has set targets for the whole of the district to be carbon neutral by 2025. NADCAA as an Association is doing its part in helping the council achieve this. We re-circulate plant pots, advise members on better gardening methods such as planting green manures in the autumn months when crops are removed helping to trap carbon in the soil over the winter months. We give advice in Newsletters regarding "No Dig" which is much better for the planet. Creating areas on every plot for pollinating insects is very important and has been extremely successful.

Rainwater Harvesting

BBC's CountryFile reported that within 25 years there will not be enough water for the growing population. In a survey by Sheffield University, only 9% per cent of the water used on an allotment field came from rainwater harvesting, with drought forecasts for the first time since 1976, we are investigating ways to collect and store more water during the winter months, this will reduce our bills and help as climate change alters our weather patterns. This will be essential in an area of high development where there are no plans for additional reservoirs, which will lead to an overall shortfall in water supply.

Biodiversity

We had the foresight to see what was happening to our pollinating insects back in 2010. All members were given the opportunity to create biodiversity areas on their plots and many members have done this with so much success that we have now added wildlife areas on all fields. At the 2021 NGS open day, everyone, without exception, told us how impressed they were with what we were doing and that we must keep on doing it.

93 per cent of the habitat vital to sustain our pollinating insects has been destroyed. The Devon Wildlife Trust has told us that what we're doing is absolutely crucial if we want to carry on growing crops on the allotment fields. All members need to take this on board and do something on their plots to help create habitat for our pollinating insects.

NADCAA has received high praise from the DWT for the wildlife areas the volunteers have created. These green corridors are going to be essential with over 7,000 houses planned.

Pesticides & Herbicides

The damage done to the environment by these chemicals is huge, 850 people die every day as result of these chemicals which are classed as poisons (source: Pan UK Ltd.).

Residues in Food

The majority of non-organic, commercially grown fruit and vegetables contain residues from pesticides and herbicides. There is great concern about what is being called the cocktail effect, where several of these chemicals are applied to crops during the season.

Research carried out by Pan UK Ltd a company that has been monitoring the effects of chemical use for over 35 years, has highlighted that (on average) 40 per cent of all commercially grown fruit and vegetables and grains still have chemical residues in them when they are purchased.

There is growing concern among all existing members and especially new younger members (of which there are many) about the carcinogenic effect of these chemicals. Most fruit crops have far more, as much as 99% of the crop having chemical residues when purchased. It goes without saying that the effects that these residues have on our health is of great concern. NADCAA members agreed a ban on herbicides at the 2021 AGM and a ban on slug pellets harmful to wildlife.

As a result of our efforts over many years we now have hedgehogs back on every allotment field. We have dragonflies of every kind, bats, many species of bee and even owls and a pair of peregrine falcons.

Education

HRH Prince Charles is Patron of the National Allotment Society and he wrote an article voicing his concern that some children are five generations removed from anyone who has ever worked the land. This is an area where we are trying to create change going forward. We created our first learning centre in 2021. We see this as a way to enable us to pass on knowledge to old and new members alike regarding specific skills, e.g., pruning fruit trees. It has also been suggested that we use the area for workshops where we can invite people to give lessons or talks on specific subjects.

The Cost-of-Living Crisis (COLC)

What better way to combat the COLC than renting an allotment? A packet of seeds can be purchased for as little as 50p and you end up giving plants away because you have too many. Tomatoes, Lettuce, Courgettes, all the Soft Fruits, Leeks, Cabbages, Sweetcorn, Rhubarb, Brussels Sprouts, Peas, Runner Beans, Carrots, Onions, Potatoes the list really is endless. A person with a Full Plot who plants sensibly and makes the best use of the ground can grow 80% of the fruit and vegetables they will require.

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The War in Ukraine

It is being widely reported that the continuing war in the Ukraine will contribute to worldwide food shortages and rising food prices.

Food production in the C21st

The House of Commons Food & Rural Affairs Committee said in its report on - Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK - "Consumers will play a vital part in enabling Defra to achieve its vision for the UK food system. They will need to be encouraged to think more about the environmental consequences of where and how their food is produced, and to be provided with sufficient information to enable them to make responsible choices. Increasing interest in local and home production on the part of some consumers is particularly encouraging in this context, because it is a way of reconnecting people with the process of producing the food that they eat. **The role of local and home production, and of educating children about food, should be included in Defra's vision and strategy for food.**" This is where NADCAA can play a big part provided the required allotments are forthcoming.

Urban Horticulture (UH) is going to become more and more prominent in all of our lives going forward. Sheffield University tracked a large group of allotment gardeners from all over the UK and produced many statistics.

There are a number of ways in which integration of UH might contribute to enhanced urban sustainability. For example, increasing kitchen waste compost for use in UH and redirecting excess rainfall for growing purposes could not only lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions but also a reduction in costs associated with landfill management, water demand and flood mitigation.

Composting

Producing food locally and composting waste, has the potential to reduce overall food waste as well as lowering the emissions associated with food spoilage occurring during transportation. 79% of allotment gardeners' food waste is composted back onto the allotment.

Local Crop Production

Research has demonstrated that allotment gardening has the potential to be a highly important form of UH. One case study analysis found that it could provide fruit and vegetables for 3% of a city's population from allotments covering less than 1.5% of the city's area.

David Goulson, Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex, specialising in Ecology and Conservation of Insects. Carried out a study in which he concluded that a group of around 40 competent allotment gardeners, could, between them, get yields of between 31 and 40 tonnes per hectare, whereas a farmer can only get about three and a half tonnes of oil seed rape or eight tonnes of wheat per year per hectare.

The farmer will also apply about 20 different pesticides and fertilisers to achieve the same yield. The allotment gardeners can therefore, grow between **four and eleven times** the weight of produce that can be obtained from an intensively farmed arable field, making them not only more productive, but **far more biodiverse**.

Better Land Management

One third of the world's soils are degrading due to overuse of chemical fertilisers, and its ability to support plants and animals is diminishing as a result.

75 billion tonnes of soil are lost every year. If only commercial growers would change to regenerative farming (not unlike allotments) this could be reversed, the soil could regenerate itself and would have the ability to store 4.5 billion tonnes of carbon every year, which is 10% of humanity's greenhouse gas emissions.

Allotment gardeners tend to use management practices conducive to the maintenance of highly productive soils. This means that unlike commercial producers they take care of the soil and many follow "No Dig", a method of gardening that allows soil to regenerate, and which is becoming more and more popular (Source - The Climate Show).

British Vegetable Production

Commercial vegetable production in the UK has dropped every year for the last five years. Currently 6,000 farmers are about to retire with nobody willing to take over their farms, and in the next ten years another 6,000 are forecast to retire. The need for more locally grown food is going to increase exponentially with the passage of time and allotments will be the way forward. In addition, Brexit has not to date been kind to farmers, and there are reports that many are considering leaving the farming community for good.

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Environment

Housing developments are destroying much of the very environment needed by the species we are constantly being told need our help, and the Devon Wildlife Trust informs us that the importance of allotment fields going forward cannot be underestimated. We worked with the DWT to create a Wildlife Awareness Award. This is awarded dependent on answers given in an on-line questionnaire. There is also scope in the future (if a grant can be obtained) for plaques for each allotment field in the South West where the members have all shown awareness.

In a recent survey of members across the South West Region, 60% said that they thought that Climate Change, loss of pollinating insects and developments were the biggest challenge facing all allotment associations.

The 25% per plot bio-diversity areas that we introduced in 2010 have worked so well that we have taken small uncultivable areas on each of the fields and created wildlife corridors which also provide social areas.

This has to be one of our biggest concerns going forward, the mass extinction of pollinating insects must be turned around and we are helping to achieve that wherever possible.

Demand

At the start of 2020 for every 100 plots that exist in the UK there were 52 names on a waiting list. To give that some perspective that is 52 people on a list for every allotment site the size of Decoy Field. A figure supported by NADCAA's own waiting list which at the time of writing has 150 names on it, and people are waiting on average four years for a plot. That is going to increase because members are not resigning in the numbers that they used to.

During lockdown over half a million people applied for an allotment, the general census of opinion at national level is that there is a mass realisation that in the future unless we all grow some food of our own there will be food shortages, coupled with the growing realisation of the benefits of being in nature for mental health. One thing is certain demand is not going to drop, it is certain to increase, and more developments means this needs to be taken into account.

The population of Newton Abbot is around 26,790. The Office of National Statistics advises that to calculate the number of households this number must be divided by 2.36 which equals 11,351. With 310 existing members plus 150 prospective members currently on waiting lists that are growing every day, we can calculate that 4.05% of the population in Newton Abbot want an allotment and 1.32% are currently on a waiting list.

Using the same mathematical method, the population of Newton Abbot 100 years ago was approx. 18,000, divided by 2.36 gives 7,627 households, and there were eighteen allotment fields. This really does illustrate how allotments have been allowed to disappear from our landscape. Sadly, we don't have membership numbers for that far back but with food shortages after WW1 and Spanish Flu we can only imagine how big the demand was.

We have looked at planned developments for Newton Abbot and applying the 4.05% to the number of houses being built we submit the following requirements for your **URGENT** attention –

<u>Development</u>	<u>Homes Planned</u>	<u>Allotment Allocation Required @ 4.05%</u>	<u>Plot Size</u>
Berry Knowles	244 - 276 Homes	10 – 11	250 Yards
Forches Cross	279 - 360 Homes	11 – 15	250 Yards
NA1 - Houghton Barton (already built)	655 Homes	27	250 Yards
NA1 - Houghton Barton	1,634 – 2,109 Homes	66 – 85	250 Yards
Whitehill	450 Homes	18	250 Yards
NA3 – Wolborough Barton	1,500 – 1,700 Homes	61 – 69	250 Yards
Langford Bridge Farm	450 Homes	18	250 Yards
Milber		Allocation too small to be considered.	
Chercombe Bridge Road	170 – 256 Homes	7-10	250 Yards
Priory Road	350 Homes	14	250 Yards
Conitor Copse	71-107 Homes	3 - 4	250 Yards
South Of NA3		Allocation too small to be considered.	
Howton Road	80 Homes	3	250 Yards
Canada Hill	49-70 Homes	2-3	250 Yards
Ogwell Central	72-108 Homes	3-4	250 Yards
South Of Aller	60-65 Homes	2	250 Yards
Caravan Storage at Linden Lea		Allocation too small to be considered.	
Zig Zag Quarry	74-96 Homes	3-4	250 Yards
Kingsteignton	141-159 Homes	6	250 Yards
<u>Totals:</u>	<u>Homes Planned</u> <u>6,279 – 7,291</u>	<u>Total Allotment Allocation Required</u> <u>254 – 295**</u>	<u>250 Yard Plots</u>

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** This does not allow for the expected increase in members who want to -

- a) Reduce their carbon footprint.
- b) Cut down on plastic packaging around food.
- c) Reduce the amount of residues they are consuming in commercially grown food.
- d) The people that want to make a significant effort to help the environment and our wildlife.
- e) The people who need to grow their own food because of the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine.
- f) The 150 people who are on the waiting list.

Therefore, the reality (dependent on the build number) is going to be –

NADCAA Waiting List = 150

+ (4.05% of 6,729 Lower Build Number) = 254

Total Requirement = 404 Plots

NADCAA Waiting List = 150

+ (4.05% of 7,291 Upper Build Number) = 295

Total Requirement = 445 Plots

Our expectation is that the actual number of people wanting an allotment could easily be three or four times this amount.

Summary

NADCAA has a good history regarding running allotments. We are held up by the South West Rep. of the National Allotment Society for the last 25 years as a Model Association. We have a team that are dedicated to the preservation, conservation, promotion and acquisition of new allotments.

Demand is far greater than the current provision in all of the various development plans for Newton Abbot. In addition, there needs to be more provision for the influx of people that are going to be wanting an allotment because of the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine, the people who want to reduce their carbon footprint and all of the other reasons stated above.

In what we all refer to as the “good old days” an allotment plot was the size of four conventional 250 yard, plots. On one you might have pigs fed any garden waste, chickens for eggs - on another you would have fruit, and on the other two you would have winter and summer crops. Are we seeing a need to return to the allotments of the “the good old days” in the very near future?

As already mentioned allotments address so many of the problems that we face today. Fresh clean chemical free food, composting which reduces landfill and reduces greenhouse gas production, locally grown food is high on the agenda for government going forward, it is estimated that there are only 90 harvests left in the UK farmland unless farmers change to regenerative farming. Allotment gardeners look after their soil and “No Dig” is even making appearances at national garden shows like Hampton Court.

Rainwater harvesting is a must for all allotment gardeners and could if properly implemented save up to 26% of the mains water that currently costs allotment associations dearly. With climate change the need to save more water is going to be a must. Especially with the no provision for additional water collection for all the houses in the new developments.

Saving and looking after our soil is another great concern. Without it the dustbowl that appeared in the USA in the 1930's could be what we see around the world. Allotment gardeners take great care of their soil.

Carbon footprint reduction is also high on the list with no need to ship food around the world or package it in plastic if you grow your own.

Most importantly, there are the physical and mental health benefits as well. So many people are now realising the importance of connection with nature, and how gardening benefits sufferers from so many problems, and the Allotments have been described by the NHS as the “Natural Health Service”. During lockdown many members informed me that they would have gone mad if it hadn't been for their allotment.

Many members are young or middle aged, they bring their children to the plot, ride an electric bike or drive an electric car, they are ecologically aware and care about the carbon footprint created by shipping food around the world. Their children are being taught about chemical residues in food and they want chemical free food.

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The last couple of years has seen the first explosion of applications for allotments, but with more and more programmes talking about insect loss, residues in food and the damage done by fast food there needs to be a plan put in place now.

Hele Park – There were supposed to be allotments delivered at Hele Park and we have a substantial number of residents still waiting for the them as they were promised. We have met with officials from both Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey and from our point of view as the Managing Agent for Newton Abbot Town Council, these allotments will never be fit for purpose until somebody makes the developers finish the fields.

There is written evidence that these allotments were supposed to be delivered under an S106 order and the residents, the Town Council and The Association are still waiting. You cannot grow crops on the Taylor Wimpey site because of limited access and no topsoil, and the Persimmon site floods.

Urban horticulture is a phrase that we are hearing more and more in published reports regarding allotments. It is the new phrase for "grow your own", but it is much more than that. We are all going to be more reliant on locally grown food as we move into the second quarter of the 21st century. Rainwater harvesting, preservation of habitat, elimination of pesticides and herbicides are all of huge concern in the reports that are currently being published. The need for allotments locally is going to increase dramatically and it is incumbent on all of us to do what we can to ensure that we get good serviceable allotment fields delivered.

The word "allotments" appears several times in the **Teignbridge Local Plan**, but the number to be provided is never mentioned, that in itself is very worrying. The experience with both Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon has not filled us with confidence when it comes to the provision of an allotment field. We are being fobbed off with pieces of scrub land and if it weren't for our letters to the CEO's I don't think we would be any further forward.

In other parts of the Country the National Allotment Society assure us that the Developers are talking to the Allotment Associations from the very start of the development. Before a spade is put into the ground the area for allotments is agreed and cordoned off, soil samples are taken and analysis done. Then a plan for the allotment site is put forward ensuring good access, plots for the disabled, parking, room for the dumping of manure by local farmers, water troughs, toilets, bio diversity is even being built in so that it is around the edges of the sites, everything is worked in advance with the developer. That is what needs to happen here in Newton Abbot.

Signed on behalf of the NADCAA Management Committee, NADCAA Members & all the prospective members that are going to want plots going forward.

Tim Callard

Chairman NADCAA / National Allotment Society SWB

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