GRANTHAM ALLOTMENT SURVEY

In respect of the proposed redevelopment of the Barracks Gardens/Beacon Lane Allotments, Beacon Lane, Grantham.

For Yelcon Limited

Date: December 2007

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Ref: CAPL104456/A6/MQM
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### Appendix 1
Summary of Council’s Survey 2004

### Appendix 2
Survey Form
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Savills L&P Limited have been instructed to prepare and submit this allotment assessment in support of a planning application for the development of a former allotment site for housing. Regard has been had in preparing this report to both national policy and advice as contained in PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (ODPM 2002) and also the Council’s own Local Plan Policy, in particular Policy REC7.

1.2 Policy REC7 of the Adopted Local Plan states:

"Planning permission will not normally be granted for development involving the loss of allotment land unless it can be demonstrated that there is no further need for such facilities in the locality of the proposal, or equivalent facilities can be provided in an acceptable location elsewhere."

1.3 This report details the findings of a survey carried out earlier this year into the allotments in Grantham and demonstrates that there is no further need for these allotments in the locality. Large numbers of allotments throughout Grantham were at the time of the survey were unused or used for purposes other than for the growing of vegetables etc., and as a consequence were often visually unattractive.

1.4 In contrast there where other allotment sites which were very popular with waiting list and which provided a very useful function providing both a recreational pastime as well as a valuable source of healthy food. Nevertheless, even these well maintained sites did suffer from some form of problem, such as security or parking issues which would improve the quality of the allotment.
2.0 THE PROCESS

2.1 The survey was based upon the Council's own allotment survey undertaken in 2004. The aims and objectives of that survey were to find out which allotment gardens were in use and what the level of demand was within the district as part of the formulation of policies for the Local Development Framework.

2.2 The Council's survey identified a total of 9 allotment sites within Grantham (Appendix 1), compared to the 11 identified in this study. The results highlight that some sites were in demand, with some having a waiting list. However, four sites had vacancies: Huntingtower Road, Barracks Garden, Stamford Street and Gonerby Hill Foot. In addition, a number had plots uncultivated but they were still either owned or rented out. For example, Bridge Street had 8 plots not cultivated at the time of the Council survey.

Background information on Allotments

What is an Allotment?

2.3 An 'allotment garden' is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of fruit or vegetables for consumption by himself and his family. In the UK, allotments are small parcels of land rented to individuals usually for the purpose of growing food crops. There is no set standard size but the most common plot is 10 rods, an ancient measurement equivalent to 302 square yards or 253 square metres.

Allotment Land Ownership

2.4 The land itself is often owned by local government (parish or town councils) or self managed and owned by the allotment holders through an association. Some allotments are owned by the Church of England. In Grantham only one site was identified as being owned by the Council.

2.5 The majority of allotment sites nationally are owned by local authorities and may be termed 'statutory' or 'temporary' where: 'statutory' allotment land is land of which the freehold or very long lease is vested in the allotments authority, and which was either originally purchased for allotments or subsequently appropriated for allotment use. 'Temporary' allotment land is rented by an allotments authority or owned by the authority but ultimately destined for some other use.

2.6 The designation of a local authority site as 'temporary' or 'statutory' is particularly important since, under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925, a local authority must seek permission from
the Secretary of State before selling or changing the use of a 'statutory' site. The local authority must satisfy the Secretary of State that adequate provision has been made for allotment holders who are displaced by the sale of the site. This provision does not apply to private sites such as Barracks Gardens.

**Allotment Rental Costs**

2.7 Rental costs vary tremendously across the country. Some pay as little as £8.00 pa and others £80.00. Most tend to be in the region of £20 to £40 per year often with discounts for the unwaged, retired etc. In Grantham the charges are around the £15 - £35 level.

**Original Allotments**

2.8 The history of allotments can be said to go back over a thousand years to when the Saxons would clear a field from woodland which would be held in common. Following the Norman conquest, land ownership became more concentrated in the hands of the manorial lords, monasteries and church. The reformation in the 1540s confiscated much of the church lands but they were transferred via the crown to the lords.

2.9 In the late 1500s under Elizabeth I common lands used by the poor for growing food and keeping animals began to be enclosed dispossessing the poor. In compensation allotments of land were attached to tenant cottages. This is the first mention of allotments.

**Allotment History 17th to 18th Century**

2.10 Land was being enclosed and more and more people began to live in cities and large towns. This move from a subsistence economy to the more modern industrial system was increasing the numbers of the poor who, without the benefits of a social security system, could literally starve for lack of food or the land on which to grow their own food.

**Enclosures under the public General Enclosure Acts of 1836, 1840 and 1845**

2.11 By the 19th Century the pace of change had increased and the General Enclosure Acts of 1836 and 1840 made it possible for landowners to enclose land without reference to parliament as long as a majority of them (in value and number) agreed to do so.

2.12 The General Enclosure Act of 1845 and later amendments attempted to provide better protection for the interests of small proprietors and the public. This was enacted in no small part due to fear of civil unrest and revolt and provided for land to be set aside for allotment use. The act required that the Commissioners should make provision for the landless poor in
the form of "field gardens" limited to a quarter of an acre. This was really the beginning of allotments as we have today in the UK.

2.13 The act failed to actually provide much land for the use of the poor. Of the 615,000 acres enclosed only around 2,200 acres were actually to become allotments.

2.14 The urban allotment development was beginning to emerge, as evidenced by the "guinea gardens" brought into use on the outskirts of Birmingham by the second half of the eighteenth century. These however gradually disappeared as the outward spread of the city led to them being closed and the land used for building purposes.

The Allotment Act 1887

2.15 Allotments and Cottage Gardens Compensation for Crops Act 1887 obliged local authorities to provide allotments if there was a demand for them. The local authorities resisted complying with the act and revision was required to strengthen the act.

Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908

2.16 The Smallholding and Allotment Act 1907 imposed responsibilities on parish, urban district and borough councils to provide allotments and further legislation in 1908 consolidated previous acts and resolved various anomalies.

2.17 To the Victorians allotments were a productive use of time keeping the poor away from the evils of drink and providing wholesome food for a workforce housed in tenements and high density terraced housing without gardens to speak of.

The Great War 1914 -1918

2.18 During the First World War Germany's blockade caused food shortages which increased the demand for allotments. One source of land suitable for allotments but not large enough for general agricultural use was the land owned by railway companies. These parcels of land were often allotted to the railway workers and this is the reason that you will often see allotments by railway lines today.

2.19 Following the Great War there was a decrease in demand for allotments and this, combined with increased demand for building land for housing reduced the number of allotments.
2.20 Once again Britain was blockaded and food shortages the norm. The pressure was greater than that of the First World War and even public parks were pressed into use for food production. The famous ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign exhorted and educated the public to produce their own food and save shipping needed for war materials.

2.21 Food rationing kept the demand for allotments and home grown foods high until the end of the war although rationing continued until 1954.

2.22 Allotment and home food production is highly productive in terms of land use and during the war allotments were estimated to contribute some 1.3 million tonnes from 1.4 million plots. Agricultural production generally is more efficient in terms of labour but not in terms of land usage.

The Allotment Act 1950

2.23 The result of demands for more and more building land saw the re-establishment of the Allotments Advisory Body which in 1949 recommended a scale of provision of 4 acres per 1,000 head of population. This resulted in the Allotment Act of 1950.

Decline in Allotment Numbers

2.25 Following the peak of 1,400,000 in 1943 there was a sharp decline in allotment provision to around 500,00 in the 1970s. The decline continued during the 1970s but at a much slower rate. During the 1970s there was a huge upsurge in interest in self-sufficiency and home food production epitomised by the television series The Good Life, which ran from 1975 to 1978. Details of this rapid decline is clearly illustrated in ‘Table 2’ which is an extract from Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Fifth Report printed in 1998.
The rate of decline again increased encouraged by the continuing increase in land and housing costs, which created an incentive to hard pressed local authorities to sell allotment land for high prices to housing developers.

By 1996 there were around 297,000 plots available and since then the rate of decline appears to have decreased whilst, at the same time, there has again been an upsurge in interest in growing food crops. Concerns about genetic modification of foodstuffs, chemical pollution and contamination of our food and the desire for freshness has seen an increase in demand for allotments.

The Current Situation

The results from this survey will highlight which allotment sites are vacant, where there is no need or demand and identify allotments areas that are in use and also where demand exceeds availability. It will also comment were non allotment use is significant as a number of plots seem to be used for other uses such as the storage of building materials, including the site at Barracks Gardens. In addition, it was noted that a number of allotments on the less popular sites included a significant element of poultry keeping. This generally exceeds what is allowed under the Allotments Act (1950) which allows the keeping of hens but not cockerels on allotments.

Each allotment was assessed by analysis of OS plans, aerial photographs and by visiting each site when a visual assessment of the site was undertaken. The details of which are given in the following section.

In addition to the above assessment, a survey questionnaire was sent to each of the known Allotment Associations. The addresses of allotment associations were compiled from the Council's allotment survey undertaken in 2004. (Appendix 1). In addition, other allotment sites were identified during the above visual assessment stage and survey forms were hand delivered.

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) requested the following information:
1. Name & Contact Details
2. Ownership. Does the association/controlling authority own the allotments?
3. Allotment Details. Area and number of plots
4. Usage. Plots in use as allotments/other uses
5. Demand. Waiting list/location of demand
6. Problems/Issues? Problems or issues that are of concern to the allotment holders such as security, vandalism, parking.
7. Solutions. What the priority improvements
2.32 The response from the various allotment societies was poor with only 2 out of the 11 allotment sites bothering to return the forms and with one of the local landlord, who own four of the allotment sites, refusing to participate in the survey. No survey form was sent to Harrowby Road allotments as no contact details were identified at the various sites visits or for that matter anyone present on site to provide such details.

2.33 Nevertheless, those that did return the questionnaire validated the results of the visual assessment as detailed below and in addition raised a number of issues that needed to be resolved, such as the need to provide better parking facilities and the provision of toilets or electricity. However such improvements have been ruled out by the respective societies largely because of cost.

2.34 Both of those that returned the survey questionnaire illustrated a steady demand for the plots despite there being a few plots vacant/underutilised and with some plots being used for 'storage purposes'.

2.35 Overall the situation in Grantham is that there is a surplus of available sites within the Grantham area, with some sites such as Harrowby Road being predominantly used for purposes other than allotment use and generally there seems to have been a decline over the years in allotment use.
3.0 THE ALLOTMENTS

3.1 Details of each allotment are provided below including a description of each allotment at the time of the survey, together with photographs taken at the time, supplemented by aerial photographs and an OS plan of each allotment. Plan 1 below shows the location of each allotment.

Plan 1 shows the location of each of the allotments covered by this survey/assessment. The nearest alternative allotment is at Harrowby Road which is about a quarter of a mile south of Barracks Gardens (site x), which is in a similar position to Barracks Gardens with a large number of plots unused and others being used for non allotment uses. The next nearest site is at either Harrowby Lane (site iv) or Inner Street (site vi). Both of these sites are popular and are well maintained in contrast to both Barracks Gardens and Harrowby Road.
i. Barrowby Road Allotments

3.2 The Council's original allotment survey identified this site as a popular allotment with a waiting list. This site is owned by the Buckminster Estate who have advised that they are not prepared to provide any information in respect of their allotments and have therefore declined to complete the survey forms for a number of the allotment sites that they own.

3.3 Nevertheless, from our own visual assessment of the allotments they appear to remain popular and well used and the situation as detailed in the Council's own survey is likely to be the same with a healthy demand for these allotments.

3.4 However, it is noted that to the north of the actively cultivated allotments the aerial photographs and OS plans suggest that there may be scope to make more allotment plots available as some do not appear to be in use, and may have not been in use for some time. The land to the north appears vacant and uncultivated and this may be considered an appropriate location (by both the Council and Buckminster Estate) to satisfy any demand for additional allotments in this area as suggested by the allotment having a waiting list at the time of the Council's original survey. It is noted that the OS plan indicates that this area was also annotated as 'Allotment Gardens'. This may indicate that all this area was used for allotments but their use has declined over the years and in a similar way to the allotments at Huntingtower Road (also owned by the Buckminster Estate), were the land has been handed back to the Estate due to the general decline in allotment use. The total area of the site (including the area to the north) is around 3.223ha (8 acres) compared to the current 3.799 acres as detailed in the Council's survey.
Plan 1. This site plan (and the aerial photograph below) of the allotments suggest that the allotment site may have been much greater in size and extended much further north than they do at the moment.
Photo 1. This shows the entrance to the site, looking north west away from the railway line, which forms the eastern boundary. The access is not ideal but even mid morning during the week there appears to be a number of people on site.

Photo 2. Again taken from the entrance to the site but looking south west towards the railway line.
Photo 3. This clearly shows how well used the allotments are, particularly the southern section of the site. Generally this appears to be a well maintained site with few apparent problems. Further north some of the allotments do not appear to be so well cultivated and are possibly vacant. Alternatively they may not be part of the allotment site, however, the OS plan suggests that this area was all part of the allotment site at one time and certainly the aerial photograph suggests this as well. Nevertheless, there may be scope to provide additional allotments by utilising these areas or possibly the other uncultivated areas to the north with agreement of the land owners and the Council. However, such development would require improvements to the access and parking arrangements and at the moment there is no evidence of a demand for additional allotments.
ii. **Harlaxton Road Allotments**

3.5 This is a relatively small allotment site of just under 2 acres or 0.761ha with around 23 plots. It is fairly well used but there are areas where it is clear that the plots have not been used for some time and there are a number of semi-derelict buildings on the site (see photo).

3.6 The Council’s original survey indicated that all the plots were occupied, but the visual survey undertaken this year suggests that this may no longer be the case. It may be that whilst all the plots are occupied not all are maintained for whatever reason. The aerial photographs also suggest that in eastern part of the site it is less well cultivated.

3.7 The site is fairly exposed and is located on Harlaxton Road and Earlsfield Lane and although there is fencing around the site, alongside the road this was not very secure at the time of the survey (see photo) and this may make the site less secure and therefore less attractive. The site is owned by the Buckminster Estate, who declined to participate in the survey.
Plan 1. The site lies on the edge of a residential area with industrial/commercial areas to the south.
Photo 1 illustrates that generally the site is well used with a large of the number of the allotments being actively worked.

Photo 2 shows that there are however some plots that are not well maintained and would appear to have not been maintained for a while. Note the poor condition of the fencing.
Photo 3 clearly illustrates the areas of the site, located primarily in the western half of the site, which do not appear to be in cultivation. The site on the south east corner is the one shown in Photo 2 above, which also appears to be abandoned.
iii. Gonerby Hill Foot/California Gardens

3.8 These allotments are understood to be still used, but the tenants have been given notice to quit. This was the situation in 2004 when the Council carried out their survey. Certainly at the time of the site survey earlier this year (March 2007) a number of the plots were still being actively cultivated.

3.9 It is understood that tenants have now been given until March 2008 to quit the site.

3.10 Access to the site is via Maltings Lane under a small, narrow bridge, which carries the railway line. A substantial number of plots appeared to be vacant at the time of the survey, but others seemed to be well kept. This obviously reflects the fact that tenants have been served notice. Recent press reports suggest that around 30 people still have plots at this site out of a total of 64 indicating quite a strong demand in the area for allotments.

3.11 The total site area is 3.537ha (8.739 acres).
Plan 1 shows the location of the allotment site and its access underneath the railway line from Maltings Lane. The site is surrounded on three sides by agricultural fields.
Photo 1 showing access to the allotment site underneath the railway line.

Photo 2 a view from off Barrowby Road looking east towards the allotment site and the railway line. Any development of this site would likely require access from this direction because of the presence of the railway line.
Photo 3. This aerial view shows that whilst only a few of the plots have permanent buildings on them the plots are still cultivated and are not left to ‘nature’.
i. Harrowby Lane

3.12 This is a very popular allotment site located within a large residential area and is very well kept. At the time of the Council's survey there were no vacant plots and the visual survey suggests that this remains the case. This has also been confirmed by the return of the survey form, which states that all plots are currently taken and that there is a waiting list (see photo). Generally people have to wait 6-12 months to get a plot.

3.13 The site is secure being surrounded on all sides by the rear gardens of the houses that back onto the site and having only one means of access, which is secured by a gate. However, there are reports of minor problems of trespass, vandalism and theft.

3.14 The site is owned by the South Kesteven District Council and the association identifies five areas that would improve the allotment in the following priority:

   i. Parking (see photo)
   ii. Toilets
   iii. Security
   iv. Amenity Building
   v. Improvements to footpaths

3.15 Concerns were also raised about fly tipping and asbestos disposal and the lack of action from the Council in respect to providing improvements to the allotments such as the provision of new amenities.

3.16 The site area is 1.502ha (3.710 acres)
Plan 1. This shows clearly that the site is surrounded on all sides which will help make it secure, especially as there appears to be only one means of access. Located within a very large residential area.
Photo 1 showing the entrance to the site by the sides of a house.

Photo 2 clearly shows how tidy the site is and how the site is enclosed by the surrounding houses.
Photo 3. This is the notice board within the site. Not all sites had such a board but his one illustrates the steady demand for allotments on this site and also draws attention to some of the issues faced by such sites, namely problems of where to park vehicles.
Photo 4. This aerial photograph shows how the site is surrounded by housing and also illustrates how well maintained the site is. Note however, that there are limited facilities to park within the site.
v. Huntingtower Road

3.17 This is one of the larger allotment sites in Grantham and extends in total to around 4.717ha (11.3655 acres). However around half of this total (6.5 acres) has been handed back to the landowners (Buckminster Estates) and a fence erected between the two parcels of land (see photo). This happened prior to the Council's own survey in 2004.

3.18 The site is located in one of the older residential areas of Grantham and the surrounding housing is mostly in the form of two or three storey terraced and semi-detached properties. Consequently the density is quite high. New housing is being developed close by and this includes both two storey family homes and higher density apartments.

3.19 The Council survey revealed that there were a total of 104 plots remaining on the site with about 60 occupied.

3.20 The site is not very secure and access is readily gained as the track to the allotments is also used to provide access to the garages and rear gardens of the properties on Huntingtower Road, which backs onto the site. Some fly tipping occurs, but generally those plots occupied appear to be well maintained (see photos).

3.21 The land to the south of the site, which has been handed back to the landowner, is left overgrown and has a few derelict buildings/sheds on it.

3.22 Improvements to security and the provision of additional amenities could help to increase the demand for these allotments, which may arise from the new development that are taking place near the site, to the south.
Plan 1 Shows the total extant of the original allotment site. However, about half of the site is no longer used as allotments and has been handed back to the landowner. New development is taking place to the south of the site.
Photo 1 shows the entrance to the site. The tract to the left provides access to both the allotments and to the rear of the properties on Huntingtower Road which back onto the site.

Photo 2. Those plots which are occupied are generally well maintained. However, within the site there are a quite a few vacant plots despite half of the land being handed back to the landowner.
Photo 3. The rear of the properties on Huntingtower Road most of which seem to have garages fronting onto the allotments. Security of the site may be an issue and this is evidenced by the fly tipping.

Photo 4 shows the boundary with the land to the south which was part of the allotment site but which has now been handed back to the landowners. The boundary between the two is not secure.
Photo 5 shows the number of plots that were not actively being cultivated within the area retained as allotments. It also shows the area to the south which is no longer part of the allotments. The racks running along the southern and northern edges of the site also serve those properties that back onto the site.