

ROSS-ON-WYE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

SURVEY OF GROWING PLACES

(revised and updated February 2019)

- *The Neighbourhood Plan can do a lot to protect existing growing plots, community gardens etc. and can also require that new ones are provided in, or linked to, new developments.*
- *This report therefore explains what is there now (or has been until recently), how well it is used and so forth, as well as any information about future demand (e.g. waiting lists).*
- *The surveying for this was quite simple, as below.*

Content

1. Map

Showing all existing areas/sites of publicly maintained gardens and growing strips

2. Sites

For each site on the map we describe (as applicable):

- Where possible, the owner of the land and the annual charges made per plot or strip.
- The managers of the site (if other than the owner).
- How many plots there are.
- How many are let, how many (if any) are not used.
- Where possible, an idea of where the plot users live (very near, from anywhere in Ross, from further afield etc.).
- Any common facilities provided, e.g. store, meeting space, composting.
- General condition of the site as a whole (e.g. security, access, maintenance).
- General condition of plots let out.
- Any waiting list for plots and, if so, how many on it and how frequently new plots become available.
- Who undertook the survey.

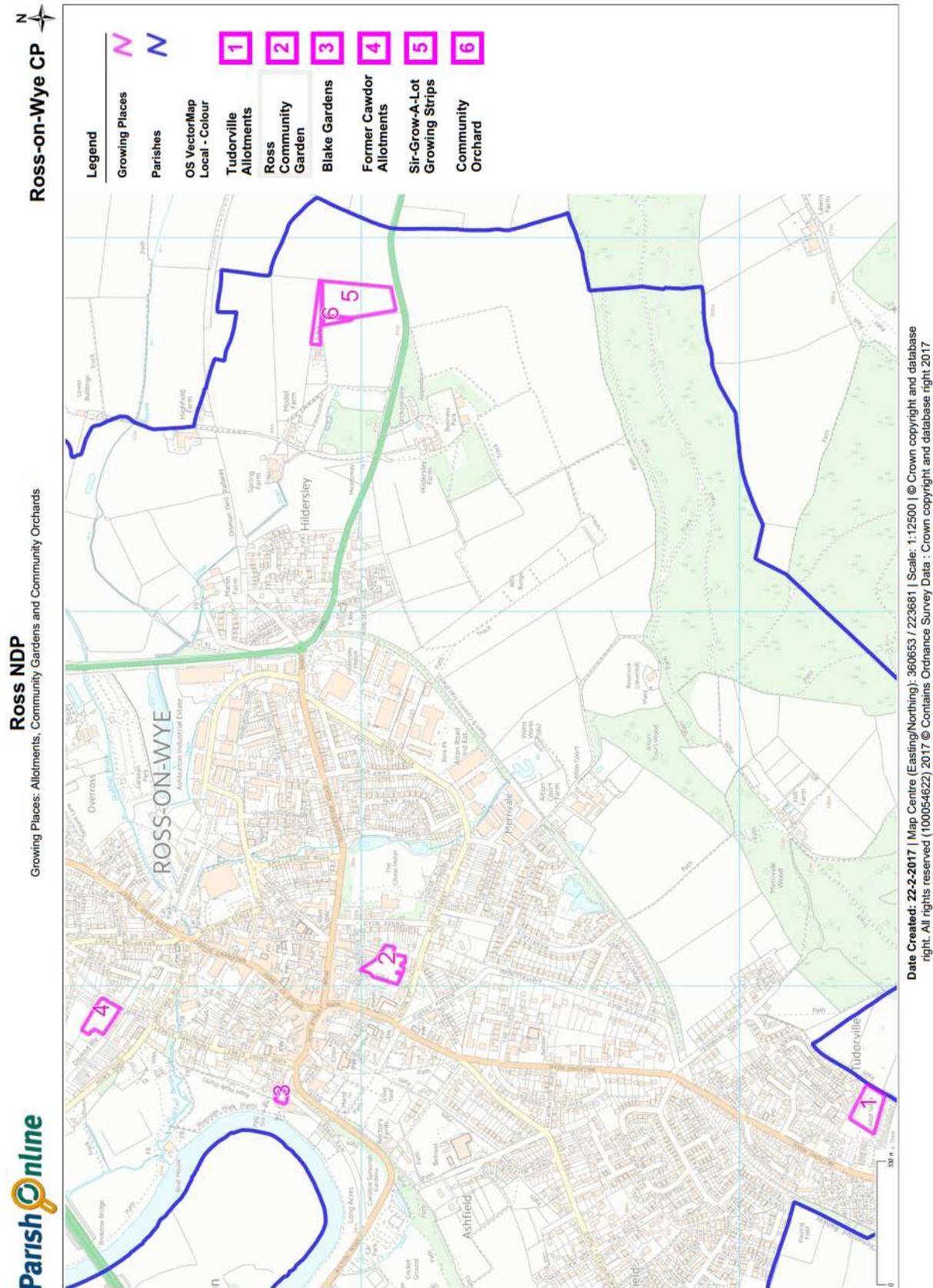
3. Policy, Supply and Demand

It is more difficult to know about gaps in provision or future demand but some thoughts on the following are presented:

- National policy and rationale.
- National demand and supply situation.
- Ross demand and supply situation.
- Areas of Ross where there are no allotment sites but some may be needed.
- Areas of land that might possibly be used for allotment sites.
- Whether it would be appropriate to include space for allotments in development sites.

1. Map

The map below shows the main existing areas/sites of publicly maintained gardens and growing strips. There are also smaller areas, mostly flower-beds, that have been adopted by residents or interest groups.



2 Sites

2.1 Tudorville Allotments

- i. The owner of the land is Ross on Wye Town Council.
The Council let the land to the Tudorville Allotment Association who manage the allotments.
The charges we make to our members are minimal and cover the cost of maintaining the allotments – grass cutting, water supply etc.
Members carry out all the maintenance themselves.
- ii. Site Manager of TAA as mentioned above..
- iii. There are 51 plots.
- iv. All plots are let and there is a waiting list.
- v. The allotments are open to residents in the area served by Ross Town Council.
- vi. Common facilities – mowers, strimmers and 2 no. equipment sheds.
Composting is carried out by the individual members on their own plots.
- vii. General condition of the site is good.
Security fencing and key pad entrance gate.
Maintenance is carried out by the members either individually e.g. mowing of paths around the plots or as a communal activity e.g. pruning overhanging trees.
- viii. Plots are in good condition as required by the rules. If a member has health issues and finds it difficult to maintain his / her plot assistance is usually given in the short term or a smaller plot is found.
- ix. There are no vacant plots and the waiting list in the last couple of years has varied from 2 to over 10, with an average of about 5.
The length of the waiting list and the duration of the wait are known to be a deterrent to joining the list; i.e. there is more demand than is currently declared.
Members who wish to give up usually wait until the end of the season, September, when the rents are due for the next year.
- x. *Compiled by John Taylor, Secretary, Tudorville Allotments Association, 13th December 2016 and revised January 2019.*

aerial image overleaf...



Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

2.2 Community Garden

- i. The owners of the land are Robin and Caroline Bennett.
The owners let the land to the Ross-on-Wye Community Garden is a Social and Therapeutic garden project run by Haygrove as a charitable enterprise.
- ii. The Garden is managed by Tim Shelley: 07972624378
tim.shelley@haygrove.co.uk .
- iii. The manager and volunteers carry out all the maintenance themselves.
- iv. Ross on Wye Town Council Amenities Committee.
- v. There are various areas of the garden devoted to, e.g., polytunnels, fruit, vegetables, wild flower, orchard and rest areas.
- vi. Volunteers come from Ross and beyond. The Garden currently partners with schools, colleges, care homes, GP surgeries, The NHS Trust and other local organisations.
- vii. Common facilities – there are storage areas, rest space and lavatory on site. Composting is carried out on site.
- viii. General condition of the site is excellent.
The garden is now recognised as 'organic'.
The site is secured but accessible to the public weekday mornings for people to buy plants and veg and we indicate that nearer the time when we are open. There are also other times when we open to the public e.g. NGS weekend.
The Garden not only sells produce from the site, but runs a seasonal veg bag scheme for employees of Haygrove, and makes two deliveries a week to The Ross Food Larder.
- ix. *Compiled by Tim Shelley, 15th March 2017.*



Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

2.3 Blake Gardens

- i. The owner of the land is Ross on Wye Town Council. Volunteers carry out all the maintenance themselves.
- ii. Ross on Wye Town Council Amenities Committee.
- iii. There are various areas of the garden laid to shrubs, herbaceous planting, perennials and herbs.
- iv. Volunteers come from the area served by Ross Town Council – mostly nearby residents.
- v. Common facilities – a small storage area exists and composting is carried out on site.
- vi. General condition of the site is good.
The site is fully open to public use.
Maintenance is carried out by the volunteers – mostly on Sunday mornings.
- vii. *Compiled by Melvin Reynolds, 22nd February 2017.*

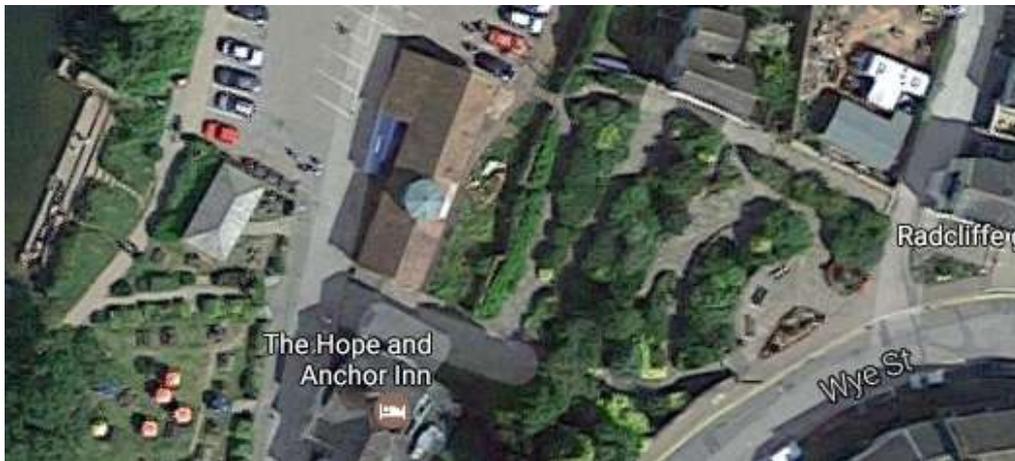


Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

2.4 Cawdor Allotments

- i. Owner: Ross Almshouses Charity. Allotment site now closed awaiting sale. Former charges unknown.
- ii. Former management arrangements unknown.
- iii. About 16 plots just before closure.
- iv. About 12 were in active use.
- v. Precise information is not available but some plots are know to have been used by people living on the estates to the north of the site.
- vi. No common facilities were provided but parking was available.
- vii. General condition of the site as a whole was fair.
- viii. Plots well maintained.
- ix. Waiting list not now applicable; information on prior situation is not available.
- x. *Compiled by Melvin Reynolds from personal information and Google maps data, 10th March 2017.*



Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

2.5 Sir-Grow-A-Lot Organic Growing Strips

- i. The owner of the land is Herefordshire Council.
The Council let the Model Farm and land to the Tenant (Simon Cutter) who uses Enviroability (local charity) to manage the Plots.
The charges are £5 per 10m x 1m strip.
There are 2 polytunnels available for rental.
An organic rotation system is used and ground is ploughed annually. Plot-holders have been moved to new land each year - though 2 year plots are now available.
- ii. Enviroability (local charity) who manage the site.
- iii. There are at present 10 plots/strips & 10 plot holders.
- iv. Not all available plots are now let.
- v. Plot holders are all Herefordshire people, most quite local to Ross.
- vi. Common facilities – Community Cabin, shared toilet with farm shop, area for composting, each year a fresh pile of manure.
- vii. General condition of the site:
Easily accessed though approach road/track which is quite rough in places.
No real security though access gate locked at night for farm shop security.
No real maintenance.
Farmer ploughs new area each year.
- viii. Hildersley was opened due to perceived lack of facilities in the town, though take up has reduced over the last 4 years.
- ix. There is no waiting list.
There are fewer plot-holders each year due to: a) rotation (weed removal is therefore an annual chore), and b) rabbit & deer depredation of crops.
- x. *Compiled by Peter Wade, 22nd December 2016.*

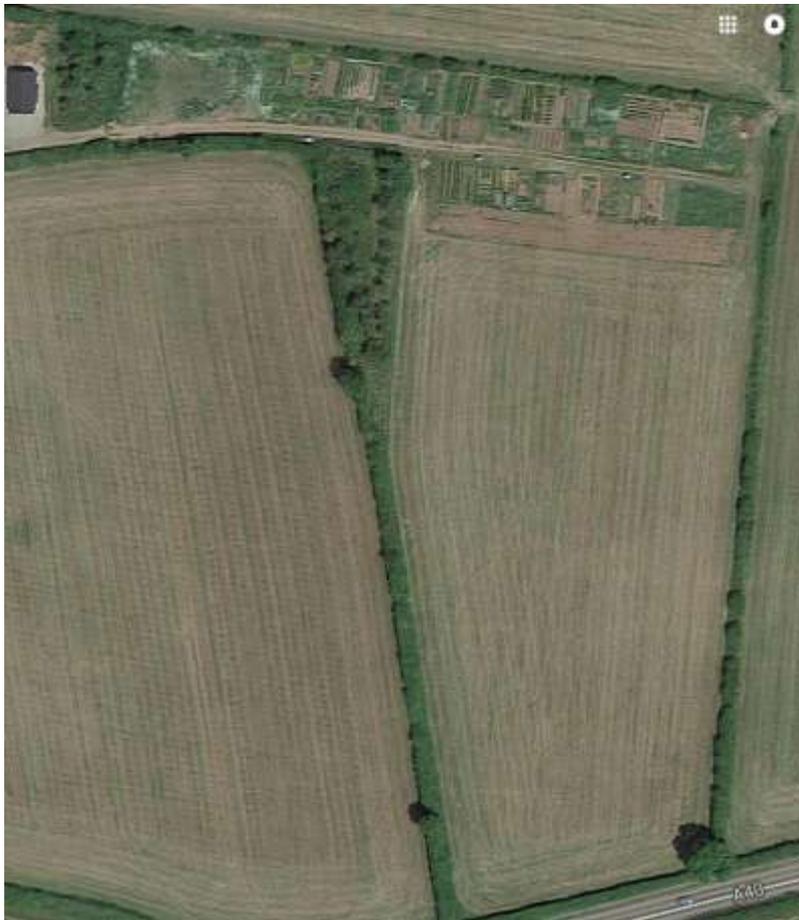


Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

2.6 Ross Traditional Orchard Project

- i. The owner of the land is Herefordshire Council.
The Council let the Model Farm and land to the Tenant (Simon Cutter) who uses Three Counties Tradition Orchard Project (TCTOP) to manage the orchard.
Volunteers carry out all the maintenance themselves under the guidance of TCTOP.
- ii. Site Manager: Karen Humphries, Three Counties Tradition Orchard Project (TCTOP).
- iii. It comprises 25 older trees, all now identified. 3 new trees were planted in Spring 2016.
- iv. A small band of volunteers (5) have been involved in care of the site.
- v. Common facilities –Community Cabin, shared toilet with farm shop.
- vi. General condition of the site:
Easily accessed though approach road/track which is quite rough in places.
No real security though access gate locked at night for farm shop security.
Maintenance e.g. mowing is carried out by the volunteers either individually or as a communal activity e.g. pruning trees.
- vii. This project was started in the spring of this year though Karen Humphries (TCTOP) contacting Enviroability & plot holders. The TCTOP has funding for 3 years & is about halfway through.
- viii. *Compiled by Peter Wade, 22nd December 2016.*



Image source: Google maps 2017-03-10

3. Policy, Demand and Supply

3.1 Policy

Thanks are due to the *National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Ltd* for the national information reproduced below from their website ¹ and some of which is from "*Allotment waiting lists in England 2013*"².

The benefits of allotments are well established ³⁴:

- providing a sustainable food supply
- giving a healthy activity for people of all ages
- fostering community development and cohesiveness
- acting as an educational resource
- providing access to nature and wildlife, and acting as a resource for biodiversity
- giving open spaces for local communities
- reducing carbon emissions through avoiding the long-distance transport of food.

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide allotments under the provisions of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908. Section 23 provides that if allotment authorities "are of the opinion that there is a demand for allotments ...in the borough, district or parish the council shall provide a sufficient number of allotments to persons ...resident in the borough district or parish and desiring the same". In determining demand an authority must take into consideration "a representation in writing by any six registered parliamentary electors or rate payers"⁵.

Support for adequate provision of allotments has come from a number of quarters in the past four years. In July 2009 the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee published a report *Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK*⁶ which concluded that "When it has been established that there is an unmet demand for allotments in a local authority area, the Government should require the local authority to publish, within three years, a plan setting out how it proposes to meet the demand."

The Bristol Strategic Partnership produced 2 documents⁷ analysing the potential threats to the city posed by depletion of fossil fuels, which concluded that "Bristol's food system is utterly dependent on cheap oil and gas", and that "Key elements of a sustainable food system for Bristol" would include "increased access to growing spaces for people to be able to grow some of their own food".

*Food 2030*⁸, published by Defra, included the goal that "People feel connected to their food and treat it as a source of wellbeing and enjoyment, for example through leisure activities such as growing and cooking food", and included the action "Making land available for community food growing", so that "more people should have the chance to grow their own food".

*Can You Dig it?*⁹ from the New Local Government Network discussed the benefits of allotments and unmet demand. It concluded that "A new "Dig for Victory" would be a dig for scores, if not hundreds, of victories across a range of policy areas", and that "As a society we cannot afford to waste the opportunities that this revival of interest presents. Urgent action is required."

The Government's White Paper: *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England*¹⁰ highlighted local innovation and includes the commitment "We will protect and promote community ownership of green spaces and improve access to land so that people can grow their own food".

3.2 National demand

Allotment waiting lists in England 2013^[2], the most recent survey of allotment usage and demand, did not cover parish or town council owned facilities – only those held by the English principal local authorities. Its conclusion, however, was that in spite of the difficulty in finding robust statistics, “waiting lists for allotments remain high”. Allowing for a continued slow decline in demand since a recent peak in 2010 (the all time peak was 30% higher in 1977) the waiting list is around 50 people waiting per 100 plots.

Even at a time of budgetary restraint, a strong argument can be made for a large increase in allotment provision because:

- food grown on allotments means fewer food miles, and could be an important part of the new greener low-carbon economy;
- allotment sites often provide a focus for a community, and improve community cohesion;
- growing one's own food is an important part of a healthy-eating programme;
- allotments offer a productive activity for the unemployed;
- local and national government reports have been promoting the benefits of allotments for some time;
- local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments.

3.3 Demand and Supply in Ross

Because in Ross demand for allotment plots in particular is limited by the length of wait (typically a couple of years) and the relatively slow turnover of plot rentals (typically one or two coming available annually) the demand is artificially suppressed. This makes it difficult to provide precise figures for unfulfilled demand and to assess gaps in provision or future demand but some thoughts are presented below.

The removal of the Cawdor plots was temporarily compensated by the organic plots at Model Farm. The problems of maintaining those plots because of the required rotation and the need to clear weed infestation has, together with rabbit and deer predation, resulted in a much reduced usage of those plots. These local condition problems have been compounded by the (erroneous) public perception that Model Farm is being closed to be turned over to industrial use has depressed demand there.

The loss of Cawdor and the smaller gardens that have typically been associated with mid-market housing since the 1980s has produced demand. However, the diminishing supply of viable plots means that the demand produced from those sources has been subject to attrition precisely because of lack of attractive local provision. This means that there are areas of Ross where there are no allotment plots but some are needed; the main demand is from the developments to the north (and increasingly to the east).

It is often argued that gardens are big enough for produce cultivation and in absolute terms that may be true. However, it ignores the fact that modern gardens also have to accommodate games that would once have been played in the street in local playgrounds or on waste ground. Street play is no longer regarded as safe by parents, carers or guardians and playground play is only safe if accompanied by those adults. The demand thus created by displacement has therefore increased rather than diminished.

At the other end of the age spectrum, and indeed for disadvantaged adults, the benefits of working, and doing so in community, are now well demonstrated – to the extent that social prescribing to promote physically and mentally healthy lives is now mainstream government policy. Ross has an aging demographic and ongoing social prescribing demand – allotments have a part to play in meeting overall policy goals.

It is therefore arguable that the large-scale development with approvals on the Pigeon House farm land to the east of the A40 should contain some allotments.

Similarly, the slightly smaller development at Hildersley could also usefully contain some allotments; although they would require good protection from rabbit and deer predation they could be accommodated on the 'dead' land required to produce an acoustic buffer zone toward the west of the site.

Any future high density development to the east of the A40 and on the Broadmeadows / Tanyard area should contain allotments.

3.4 References

- 1 The National Allotment Society <https://www.nsalg.org.uk>
- 2 Campbell M and Campbell I for Transition Town West Kirby in conjunction with the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners: Surveys of allotment waiting lists in England http://www.transitiontownwestkirby.org.uk/allotment_surveys.html
- 3 Growing in the community (second edition) (2008) Wiltshire R, and Burn D, for the Local Government Association, <https://www.local.gov.uk/growing-community-second-edition>
- 4 A Lot to Lose: London's disappearing allotments (2006) London Assembly.
- 5 House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Fifth Report: APPENDIX II: MODERN ALLOTMENTS LEGISLATION, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56002.htm>
- 6 Securing food supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK (2009) House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmenvfru/213/213i.pdf>
- 7 Building a positive future for Bristol after Peak Oil (2007) Bristol City Council, <http://bristolgreencapital.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Bristol-Green-Capital-Partnership-Peak-Oil-Report-2009.pdf>
- Who feeds Bristol? Towards a resilient food plan (2011) Bristol City Council, <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32619/Who-feeds-Bristol-report.pdf>
- 8 Food 2030 (2010) Defra, <http://appg-agscience.org.uk/linkedfiles/Defra%20food2030strategy.pdf>
- 9 Nick Hope and Victoria Ellis for the New Local Government Network (2009) Can You Dig it? Meeting community demand for allotments, <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/can-you-dig-it.pdf>
- 10 Healthy lives, healthy people: Our strategy for public health in England (Nov. 2010) Department of Health White Paper, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-lives-healthy-people-our-strategy-for-public-health-in-england>