

Roeshot Hill allotments is a statutory site comprise approximately 4.7 hectares of land with 228 existing tenancies. As such, it accounts for over half the allotment provision in Christchurch.

In March 2013 the number of applicants for allotments was approximately 100, but this has since fallen to 40. Our understanding is that much of this fall is due to uncertainty as to the future of the site. There are also significant waiting lists at other sites within the Borough.

The Pre-Submission Core Strategy document envisioned that Burton would provide a central 'hub', but this was subsequently deleted from the Core Strategy Submission document for reasons unconnected with our objections, leaving the matter of relocation unresolved.

The question raised by the Inspector is whether the relocation of the existing allotments is achievable, presumably to ensure compliance with the NPPF and also to anticipate an application by the Council to the Secretary of State under section 8 Allotment Act 1950 provisions.

We are of the opinion that the Council is not able to achieve a relocation of the allotments for the following reasons:

1. Lack of Audit

The Council has failed to carry out an up-to-date audit of allotment requirements as prescribed by clause 74 NPPF, although it recognises that the amount of new-build housing will increase the demand

2. Lack of Consultation

The meetings referred to by the Council in submission document SD4 'Duty to Co-operate/Localism Act section 110' prepared in March 2013 pp. 21-22 did not touch upon the question of relocation. The Council did attend our AGM on 15th April 2010 at our request but the Council's representative was not prepared to discuss specific proposals for relocation. Meetings of the Urban Extension Advisory Group likewise failed to address the issue of relocation, whilst we maintained throughout that the allotments should be integrated within the urban extension.

The only meeting between the Council and the Allotment Association to discuss alternative sites took place on 5th July 2013 at our request. The Council stated merely that it was actively looking for suitable allotment land in a number of locations for existing tenants of Roeshot Hill and prospective tenants on the waiting lists.

3. Lack of Strategy

The Core Strategy document provides no insight as to where an allotment 'hub' might be located, or where tenants at Roeshot Hill might be dispersed. At the meeting held on 5th July 2013 referred to above the Council was not able to make any definite proposals, but felt that its plan for a 'hub' might have to be abandoned. This is hardly consistent with the Council's

statement that “there is agreement in principle with Meyrick Estates for the provision of allotments”.

During three years of planning for the development of Roeshot Hill the Council has failed to identify a suitable site or sites for the relocation of the allotments, has failed to properly consult with tenants and has no credible strategy for resolving the problem. We are left with mere hope or expectation that alternative land will be found which is not in our view sufficient for the Council to discharge its obligations under clauses 70, 73 and 74 of the PPF, or to satisfy the Secretary of State under section 8 Allotments Act 1950 proceedings.

We should also like to take this opportunity to comment on misleading statements in clause 6.7 (page 64) of the consolidated Core Strategy Document. In relation to the consultation on its ‘Options for Consideration’ Core Strategy in 2010/11 the Council has stated that “there was support for the principle of maximising the development potential south of the railway line.” In fact, the Council’s own records show that the majority of respondents preferred options UE3 and UE4 which would retain the allotments within a smaller housing development. The figures are as follows:

Option	Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
Option UE1	81	20	0	101
Option UE2	37	20	0	57
Option UE3	93	19	0	112
Option UE4	217	19	0	236

Yours faithfully

Alan Ruck
Secretary,
Roeshott Hill Allotment Association