

**West Malling Parish Council
and
Ryarsh Lane Allotment
Society**

**Allotment Policy Document
2023 - 2027**

Introduction

This management plan is a joint document that has been conceived, discussed and written by both the West Malling Parish Council (WMPC) and the Ryarsh Lane Allotment Society (RLAS).

The Ryarsh Lane Allotment Site is adjacent to the conservation area in West Malling, neighbouring the historic cricket pitch and Macey's Meadow. West Malling won '[Rural Community of the Year 2012](#)' and the Allotment Site is a key community facility

Over recent years there has been resurgence in the popularity of the allotment site and there are many benefits to the people of West Malling from ensuring its continued success. These include:

- cheap source of fresh fruit and vegetables, and therefore a healthy diet
- opportunity to spend time outside enjoying nature
- sense of achievement and well-being
- giving your mind something positive to focus on
- chance to learn
- reduction in stress
- chance to escape the pressures of modern living
- helps community spirit and offers an opportunity to meet people from all walks of life
- environment benefits by providing green spaces and wildlife habitats
- gardening is a good form of exercise
- a chance for children to learn where food comes from

1. Working Together

The key to a vibrant, well used and managed Allotment Site is working together and it is important that WMPC & RLAS work closely together at all times.

WMPC has recognised RLAS as the association which it will interact with in all matters relating to the Allotment Site. RLAS is committed to supporting WMPC manage the Allotment Site.

This relationship is key to the success of this management plan. WMPC has invited the Chair RLAS to sit as a member of the WMPC Amenities Committee to help build and strengthen this relationship.

2. Management of the Plan

It is important that progress against this plan is reported against as well as formally reviewed. This section details some simple arrangements to ensure that this is done.

a. Reporting Arrangements

WMPC and RLAS will undertake independent monthly reviews of the allotments using a common template (appendix 1) to be circulated with the agenda for each Amenities Committee which focusses on Allotment matters. Such reports to be completed by the chairman of each respective body or their appointed representative.

WMPC and RLAS will produce an annual report in September each year to record the progress made against the management plan. This report will be presented to the WMPC Amenities Committee for review.

3. Financial Management

It is important that there is a structured, prudent financial plan to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of the Allotment Site. This part of the plan is designed to ensure that all costs & revenues for the duration of the plan are identified upfront.

This will help minimise the risk of any unplanned financial expenditure and subsequent request for unexpected financial support from West Malling Parish Council.

a. Accounting

A key measure of successful financial planning & management is having a clear account of all receipts, deposits and payments of the Allotment Site on a yearly basis.

This transparent approach to the financial management will allow both West Malling Parish Council and RLAS to build a constructive relationship to support the ongoing improvement in this area.

The WMPC is responsible for accurately recording all financial matters relating to the Allotment Site and producing an annual account of all receipts & payments. This is shared with RLAS and is presented to the WMPC Amenities Committee.

b. Costs

It is important that every effort is made to work collaboratively to ensure all costs associated with the Allotment Site are correctly recorded.

West Malling Parish Council and RLAS are committed to working together to do this.

As the water supply is shared with Macey’s Meadow the simple process below is designed to ensure there is a clear transparent recording of the usage.

Water Supply	Take monthly meter readings of both the water meter on the allotment site & Macey’s Meadow	RLAS
	Share meter readings for both the water meter on the allotment site & Macey’s Meadow with RLAS.	WMPC Clerk

c. Income

The West Malling Parish Council has one major funding stream for the Allotment Site, namely the rent paid annually by Allotment Holders.

It is in the interests of both parties to have an agreed formula for the determination of any changes in the amount payable as rent each financial year. This will help ensure that allotments continue to be affordable, and ensure that they remain accessible to everyone including those to which cost can be a potential barrier, such as those on benefits or with a low income or pensioners.

For the period of this plan, the rent shall be varied upwards only. If the Parish Council and RLAS have not agreed the new rental figure 3 months before the relevant review date either may require it to be determined by a Surveyor acting as an expert who shall be an independent Chartered Surveyor appointed jointly by the Parish Council and the RLAS or in the absence of agreement by the President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors on the application of either the Parish Council or the RLAS.

This will ensure that the West Malling Parish Council retains the decision making function with regard to any rent rises, but provides assurance to Allotment Holders that they are protected from undue increases in their rents.

Any change to rents is decided no later than 29 September at least 12 months before the rent rise comes into effect.

d. Grants

There are a number of other funding streams available apart from rent that are available to be used to the financial management of the Allotment Site. It is important that these are explored and suitable grants applied for. They can help reduce the financial exposure of WMPC and can be used to fund capital expenditure projects.

WMPC and RLAS will work together to identify and apply for grants that can be used to help with either the day to day or planned capital expenditure for the Allotment Site.

e. Capital Expenditure

It is important to have a detailed Capital Expenditure plan for the duration of this management plan. This will allow West Malling Parish Council to have a costed financial plan for this expenditure and ensure it is properly planned for.

The items listed below have been proposed for delivery in each of the financial years that the management plan covers.

All effort has been taken to ensure the identified items are essential to the ongoing maintenance of the Allotment Site and not 'nice to have projects'. This will minimise the financial burden on the West Malling Parish Council as public finances face an uncertain future, while ensuring the long term sustainability of the Allotment Site.

As part of the detailed planning for these works, WMPC can explore with RLAS how they can work together to deliver these projects. Previous examples include the replacement of a wooden gate where WMPC purchased the materials and RLAS members provided the labour to install it. This sort of joint working can be mutually beneficial and there is scope to consider more in the future.

	Description	Financial Year
Trees	Any necessary tree work as recommended in the tree inspection report. Next inspection due 2025/26	2025/2028
Concrete Post	Replacement concrete post at farm gate	2024/2025

4. Waiting List Management

It is vital to build on the resurgence of the Allotment Site giving priority to people who live within the West Malling Parish boundaries and having a well maintained waiting list. In the event of there being vacant plots and no waiting list the allotments should be available to people who live in the neighbouring Parishes, where allotment provision is not provided, with West Malling Residents being given priority.

This is best achieved by a collaborative approach by both West Malling Parish Council & RLAS. This has begun over recent months with some changes to the waiting list process to ensure that the workload is shared and RLAS plays an active role, reducing some of the workload on the WMPC Clerk.

Below are a series of simple activities that are designed to ensure the waiting list is maintained, reviewed on a regular basis. Additionally it provides simple reports that whilst meeting the West Malling Parish Council Data Protection responsibilities allows a constructive discussion on the waiting list status.

Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Report to
Ensure two waiting lists, West Malling and outside parish, are up to date	WMPC Clerk	Ongoing Basis	WMPC Amenities Committee & RLAS
Write to all on both waiting lists to confirm they still	WMPC Clerk	Every Twelve Months	WMPC Amenities Committee & RLAS

want an Allotment.			
Report number of West Malling Parish Residents waiting and duration of waiting	WMPC Clerk	Each WMPC Amenities Committee meeting which focuses on Allotment matters	WMPC Amenities Committee & RLAS
When a plot is vacant & there is a new prospective tenant,	WMPC Clerk	Ongoing basis	RLAS
When a plot is offered to a prospective tenant, a period of three weeks is to be given for a response	WMPC Clerk	Ongoing basis	WMPC Amenities Committee
Show prospective member tenant around the Allotment Site & explain what RLAS does	WMPC CLERK AND	Ongoing basis	WMPC Amenities Committee & RLAS
Help prospective tenants complete tenancy paperwork.	WMPC CLERK	Ongoing basis	WMPC Amenities Committee & RLAS

In addition, WMPC and RLAS will work to jointly actively promote the Allotment Site to encourage new applications.

WMPC and RLAS acknowledge that with ever-increasing demands on time, many people now find a full plot a significant commitment. Acknowledging that there is also a continuing waiting list it has been agreed that plots will only be offered in half-plot sizes and WMPC and RLAS will work together to re-designate all existing full plots as two new plots as existing tenants relinquish their tenancies. Full length plots will no longer be offered to those on the waiting list.

It is stressed that existing tenants will not be expected to relinquish any of their plot unless they choose to do so. Existing plot tenants will not be offered the neighbouring plot.

5. Policy of acceptable plot cultivation standards by allotment tenants

All tenants have an obligation to cultivate their plot to an acceptable standard and ensure that their plot does not impact on the adjacent plots or the overall allotment site. Whilst acceptable standards can be subjective, this policy sets out the guidance for a plot to be deemed as “well cultivated”.

Plots are expected to be actively cultivated, i.e. crops growing, preparation for crop growing or being rested as part of crop rotation. Areas planted to attract bees and insects are welcomed but should not be excessive. Cultivated areas are expected to constitute at least 75% of the total plot size.

Plots should be free of weeds and grasses before any seed heads form, and any area which has long standing weeds or grasses will be deemed as an area of non-cultivation.

Fruit trees/bushes should be managed so that they remain at an appropriate size for the plot, and on no account should trailing branches etc be allowed to obstruct paths or go onto other plots.

All other rules of occupancy are detailed in the Tenancy Agreement signed by tenants.

6. Buildings

The Allotment site is located adjacent to a Conservation Area and is bordered by both a cricket pitch and Macey’s Meadow. It is important that any buildings on the Allotment Site are in keeping with this. Below are some simple rules that will ensure we maintain the beauty of the surrounding area while meeting the needs of Allotment Holders.

	Task	Responsibility	Reported to
Shed, Permanent Polytunnel, Greenhouse	Written permission must be obtained before erection	Allotment Holder	WMPC Amenities Committee
	The maximum permissible dimensions of any erection are 6ft by 4ft.	Allotment Holder	WMPC Amenities Committee
	ALL erections must be located at the ‘Cricket Pitch’ end of the Allotment Plot and placed to one side of the plot.	Allotment Holder	WMPC Amenities Committee

Greenhouse	It is recommended that any new greenhouse should have guttering and a water butt (minimum capacity 250L)	Allotment Holder	
	The greenhouse MUST be constructed of plastic and NOT contain glass.	Allotment Holder	WMPC Amenities Committee

It should be noted, that due to the size of half plots, they are permitted to have only one of the 3 choices listed above. It is also recommended that full plots should only have a maximum of 2 structures to avoid encroaching on the area for cultivation.

7. Site Security

We are very fortunate that we live in a low crime area and historically the Allotment Site is a low risk target for theft etc. This, in part, is due to the security measures put in place along with the vigilance of allotment plot holders.

It is important to continue to keep the Allotment Site secure and both the allotment holders and West Malling Parish Council have a role to play in ensuring this.

The section below details the measures and processes that are in place to maintain security & deal with any issues.

	Task	Responsibility	Reported to
Gates & Locks	Carry out a six monthly inspection of the gates & locks to the allotment site to ensure they are in working order.	Parish Council & RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
	Report any fault or damage identified at any time.	Allotment Holders	WMPC Clerk
	Ensure that the gate is closed and the lock secured when leaving the allotment site.	Allotment Holders	
	Report any incidents of the site being left unlocked.	Allotment Holders	WMPC Clerk
Perimeter Fencing	Carry out a six monthly inspection of the perimeter fencing to the allotment site to ensure that it is in working order.	WMPC & RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
	Report any fault or damage identified at	Allotment Holders	WMPC Clerk

	any time.		
Perimeter Hedging	Carry out a six monthly inspection of the perimeter hedging to the allotment site to ensure that it is healthy.	WMPC & RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
	Manage the contract to ensure the Perimeter Hedging is cut and maintained appropriately	WMPC Clerk	WMPC Amenities Committee
Sheds	It is recommended that sheds are locked. Any equipment of value should not be stored on site	Allotment Holders	
Incidents	Report any thefts, vandalism or other security incidents	Allotment Holders	Kent Police & WMPC Clerk
	Discuss any reports of thefts, vandalism or any other security incidents & ensure appropriate timely action is taken	WMPC Amenities Committee	Feedback to RLAS

Six monthly inspections are to occur in September and March

8. Pre Planned Maintenance

The carrying out of some basic simple checks is key to helping maintain the Allotment Site and prevent unexpected costs of repair. The identified checks have been designed to be easy to carry out, not require any specialist training and minimise any upfront costs to WMPC.

	Task	Responsibility	Reported to
Plot Markers	Carry out a six monthly check to ensure the plot markers are in place across the Allotment Site and take any remedial action identified.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Water Supply	Carry out a six monthly check to ensure that the visible water pipes are in working order and take any remedial action identified.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee

Water Taps	Carry out a six monthly check to ensure that the water taps are in working order and take any remedial action identified.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Hedges	Manage the pruning of all hedges on the Allotment Site (but not on individual plots, as this is the responsibility of individual plotholders) and ensure all appropriate work is carried out.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Trees	Manage the pruning of all trees on the Allotment Site (but not on individual plots) and ensure all appropriate work is carried out.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Pathway through Allotment Site	Carry out work to ensure that it is free of weeds and does not become overgrown.	WMPC / RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Pathways on Allotment Site	Ensure all pathways are kept clear and free of weeds etc	Allotment Holders	WMPC Clerk

9. Health & Safety

It is important that there are some simple, clear and easy to follow guidance to ensure that Allotment Holders are able to enjoy their allotment in a safe manner.

West Malling Parish Council & RLAS want to promote the safe enjoyment of the Allotment Site by all Allotment Holders and visitors. There are well documented health benefits from having an allotment, including providing good exercise, supporting overall well being including mental health.

It is the responsibility of an adult to supervise children at all times when visiting the site as some plots have small ponds.

It is important that any Health & Safety guidance for the Allotment Site are proportionate and relevant whilst ensuring it is clear where responsibility lies.

a. Visitors

West Malling Parish Council and RLAS appreciate the positives Allotment Holders and visitors can get from a visit to the Allotment Site. Allotment Holders are responsible for any visitor to their plot. The expectation is that they visit that plot only and do not go onto or interfere with any other plot or cause disturbance to another Allotment Holder.

All visitors to the allotments are the responsibility of the allotment holder at all times.

b. Chemicals

The Parish Council is committed to phasing out the use of pesticides on assets we own or manage. The goal is to phase pesticides out entirely, with the exception of use for the control of Schedule 9 plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, such as Japanese Knotweed, or where it is used to reduce material risks to asset integrity.

The Parish Council asks allotment tenants to consider pesticides as a last resort and suggest they seek alternatives.

The list below provides some simple easy to follow guidance for Allotment Holders.

Activity	Responsibility
Only Pesticides (including weedkillers and slug pellets) approved by the Health & Safety Executive should be used on the Allotment Site.	Allotment holder
All Pesticides should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions	Allotment holder
All Pesticides should not be stored on site when not in use.	Allotment holder
All Pesticides and empty containers must be disposed of in the correct manner.	Allotment holder
It is important when using pesticides that they are kept within the allotment plot & do not contaminate neighbouring plots (via water runoff etc).	Allotment holder

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c. Hosepipes

West Malling Parish Council and RLAS encourage the safe use of hosepipes by Allotment Holders. To help minimise any trip hazard, all Allotment Holders are asked to ensure that they are not left trailing over pathways.

d. Storage of Fuel & equipment

The use of petrol / 2 stroke gardening tools such as strimmers and hedge cutters is permitted (as long as the appropriate Safety Equipment is used). These should not be kept on site.

e. Bonfires

The appropriate and safe use of bonfires has a role to play in successful allotment management. It is important that where ever possible Allotment Holders compost their waste. But this cannot always get rid of all waste. A small bonfire is acceptable for the burning of green waste.

It is important that appropriate safety precautions are taken to ensure it is kept under control. It is recommended that there is water immediately available (such as a couple of buckets of water nearby) to ensure the bonfire can be put out quickly.

It is not acceptable to bring additional waste material onto the Allotment Site to burn.

Allotment holders are asked to ensure they check their bonfire pile thoroughly to ensure there are no animals (such as native hedgehogs) in it by using separate storage and bonfire piles and moving the waste between the two.

West Malling Parish Council and RLAS encourage all Allotment Holders to be considerate to others when using a bonfire. As the West Malling C of E Primary School is located adjacent to the Allotment Site, bonfires should not be lit during school times .Bonfires are permitted at all other times (including during the school holidays) but it is recommended that they are not lit after 6pm.

Allotment holders should take into account the current legislation for Statutory Nuisance on smoke and odour from bonfires and note that any permission granted by this policy document does not, in any way, override current legislation.

Allotment holders must not leave a fire, or remains of a fire, unattended if it is showing flame, smoke or glowing embers or is in such a state that it could be re-ignited. Any fire must be properly dampened down with soil to prevent re-ignition.

f. Vermin

Allotment holders should take steps to inspect any and all possible sources of food, water and harbourage for signs of vermin and a) take appropriate action on their plot and b) alert the Parish Council of their action.

10. Water Management

An available water supply is a critical service to allow Allotment Holders to maintain their allotment plot and grow fruit & vegetables successfully.

It is also important that Allotment Holders are disciplined in their use of water to ensure they water crops efficiently and do not waste water. It is therefore in all our interest to keep water usage to the minimum required for healthy crop production.

Allotment Holders are encouraged to introduce water saving measures such as the installation of water butts on their allotment to harvest water that can be used to supplement the available water supply.

The activities listed below have been designed to help promote sensible water consumption and ensure there is a robust system in place to maintain the water supply.

Activity	Responsibility	Reported to
Carry out a six monthly inspection of all visible pipes, standpipes, taps & water butts provided by WMPC	WMPC & RLAS	WMPC Amenities Committee
Turn off the water supply between 1 st December & 1 st March each year.	RLAS	
Report any damage to or leaks from visible pipes, standpipes, taps & water reservoirs.	Allotment Holder	WMPC Clerk
Ensure that all taps are turned off when not in use.	Allotment Holder	WMPC Clerk

Follow recognised good practice when watering the Allotment Plot to make best use of the water supply.	Allotment Holder	
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11. Biodiversity

Although allotments will always be mainly used for growing food, they have other values that are now gaining greater recognition. Allotments are also an increasingly important resource for wildlife. Many of the plants and animals that struggle to survive on intensively managed farmland find a refuge on allotment sites.

WMPC and RLAS support the benefits of promoting the conservation value of the Allotment Site, while continuing to cultivate it for fruit and vegetables in line with section 5. This complements the work carried out on Macey's Meadow which is next to the Allotment Site.

Advice is available to plot holders from Natural England to help identify how they can contribute to the biodiversity of the Allotment Site.

12. Dogs

WMPC and RLAS acknowledge that allotment tenants have for some years brought dogs onto the allotment site in direct contravention of the tenancy agreement. They further note that many other allotment sites do not completely prohibit dogs and therefore WMPC and RLAS will work to amend the tenancy agreement so that dogs are allowed on site, provided that:

- They are kept on a lead;
- They are kept under control and do not make a nuisance; and
- Owners remove all excrement from the site.

Reviewed August 2023

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