

Environment Committee

This document contains the written evidence received by the Environment Committee in response to its Call for Evidence, which formed part of its investigation into local food growing.

Calls for Evidence are open to anyone to respond to and in August 2024, the Committee published a number of questions it was particularly interested in responses to as part of its work, which can be found on page 1. The Call for Evidence was open from 7 August to 25 September 2024.

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Questions asked by the Committee

1. What are the main barriers to local food growing in London? In particular:
 - a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?
 - b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?
 - c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?
2. Are the benefits of local food growing sufficiently recognised and valued by current policies? In particular:
 - a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?
 - b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?
 - c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?
 - d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

London Borough of Barnet Ref No. LFG001

What are the main barriers to local food growing in Barnet?

Access to suitable land

- Allotments
 - London Borough of Barnet own over 40 allotment sites, which are managed and maintained by an Allotment Society under a lease agreement with the Council
 - Each Allotment Society is responsible for all aspects of the allotment site management, including plot allocations, the council do not manage sites on a day-to-day basis, but are responsible for ensuring sites are managed and run in line with the terms of the lease
 - There are long waiting lists for allotment plots
- Parks and Open Spaces
 - Whilst the council owns a large amount of land, a lot of it comes under estates and highways departments, rather than green spaces. Each department has different priorities and pressures on their land.
 - There are a lot of recreational pressures on our parks and open spaces, including sports pitches, mown amenity areas and conservation areas.
 - There are some non-negotiable features of a food growing site, such as good sunlight, access to water and storage.
- Policy
 - We have no policy relating to Right to Grow or use of Meanwhile Spaces, which might be suitable for community gardens or food growing
 - 52% of Capital Growth members want Right to Grow to be a campaign priority for Capital Growth, suggesting that access to land is a significant concern across London.

Access to consistent and long-term funding:

- Some internal / external funding has been obtained for specific projects, but nothing long term
- Reliance on volunteers
 - many of our volunteer groups operating within greenspaces rely on volunteers to run.
 - The Capital Growth annual members survey found 54% of gardens feel that attracting and retaining volunteers is difficult, which is echoed in Barnet.

Lack of coordination and network infrastructure

- Food growing working group has been set up internally within Barnet Council to ensure coordination and communication across different departments doing food growing
- Capital Growth is helpful in providing signposting and setting up inter-council meetings and working groups. However, their resources have been severely cut and they are not receiving any funding from our main previous funder or the GLA. They are at a high risk of not continuing beyond March 25 meaning a loss of a critical asset and beacon project for London.

- We feel the success of food growing projects in Barnet relies on a small number of dedicated volunteers/officers and without them the projects might cease to exist.

Access to Skills and Training – horticulture not appealing to young people?

- In Barnet, local community food growers ran a project for Barnet Council on a community plot to support unaccompanied asylum seekers (young care leavers) to be ready to do a Level 1 course at Capel Manor. Take-up was lower than expected. From talking to the participants who did attend, there were 2 main reasons for not attending:
 - many asylum seekers have left poor rural communities impacted by war and climate crisis in search of a better life in the city. They associate horticulture with the hardships that they have left behind.
 - they are the same as many other teenagers and want to quickly be independent and they don't see horticulture as a quick route to success. They were more positive about catering than gardening.
- Given the concern that there aren't enough young people getting trained in horticulture, it seems feasible that if the above barriers could be overcome perhaps young people, including unaccompanied asylum seekers and young care leavers, could be encouraged to take up training opportunities. Care Leaver teams in local authorities are well-placed to connect young people with horticultural training programmes. However, the young people will probably need to see inspirational garden leaders that they can relate to, and clear pathways to well-paid jobs.

a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?

- There was a lot of interest in our recent food growing project, but a lot of interested participants dropped off due to the sessions being on weekdays during the day, rather than evenings or weekends. This led us to believe that a lot of the applicants who were interested in food growing were parents or had full time jobs Mon – Fri, 9-5. The people running the sessions were not available on evenings or weekends or were already committed to other community projects at these times. We saw the timings of the sessions as a barrier to working age/parents.

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

Barnet Council examples:

Barnet Community food Growing Project – Leadership Programme

In Barnet, a joint project between the Greenspaces team, Public Health team and Incredible Edible Barnet was created to train a cohort of community food growing *leaders*. This project received £46,000 in funding from the Barnet Public Health Prevention Fund. In response to formal consultation on the Barnet Food Plan and to many informal discussions with food growers in Barnet, the Greenspaces and Public Health teams identified that a lack of community food growing *leaders* was inhibiting the growth of community food growing projects. This project aims to give community members 9 months of

hands-on training on how to establish and run a community food growing project. Ultimately, this project should lead to more opportunities for a wide range of Barnet residents to participate in community food growing, which has multiple health benefits. Participation in community gardening can enhance physical health through increased physical activity, and mental health through time spent in nature and time spent with other people.

Local councillors and cabinet members have been interested and supportive of the project including:

- Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economy and Effective Council
- Cabinet member for Environment and Climate Change
- Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing
- Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Resident Participation

Other initiatives undertaken by Barnet Council include:

- Barnet Homes gardening – provides micro-grants for gardening on council housing estates
- Barnet Council Tree Team has engaged with community groups on several projects to plant community orchards
- The Barnet Food Partnership organised a Food Summit in October 2023 which highlighted food growing
- Barnet Council biodiversity officer and public health officer engage regularly with with local food growing groups:
 - Incredible Edible
 - Clitterhouse Farm
 - Whetstone Community Plot
 - GROW at Totteridge Academy
 - Finchley Pollinators
 - OneStonegrove Community Garden and Orchard

b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

- Offering funding opportunities for community food growing projects, similar to the Rewild London Fund, but for food growing.
- Funding Capital Growth, which has been a useful resource for us, especially to connect and hear best practice and policy/project success stories from other boroughs that are more advanced with food growing.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

Several local and regional policies and strategies that could link to food growing:

- Emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Regional – London)
- Emerging Local Nature Recovery Plan (Local – Barnet)
- Emerging Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2024 update) (Local – Barnet)

Capital Growth Ref No. LFG002

Capital Growth is London's largest food growing network, with over 4,300 food growing gardens having registered since it was launched in 2008. The network is predominantly community gardens, but also includes schools, communal allotment plots, farms, home growers and individuals growing on larger sites. We support members to create more climate and nature-friendly gardens that are more resilient, welcoming and inclusive. Evidence below includes data from in-house and members surveys and reports and sector knowledge collated from our members and wider Sustain alliance members.

What are the main barriers to local food growing in London?

Through our annual surveys and engagement with our network of over 1000 growing spaces over the last 3 years we are highlighting the following barriers.

We also reference our submission ahead of Lords debate on the Levelling Up Bill.

Access to land & security of tenure

- More than 40 allotment sites in London have closed in the last decade. In 2022, Camden Council found that the average waiting time for an allotment was 12 years.
- In Capital Growth's 2023 annual members survey 30% said access to land and security of tenure was a challenge for their garden, but this is focused on those already with access to space.
- 52% of members want Right to Grow to be a campaign priority for Capital Growth, suggesting that access to land is a significant concern.
- Those without space and not connected to networks can struggle to access land or understand who can support with this access.

Access to funding and resources/ lack of investment:

- Reliance on volunteers – annual members survey found 54% of gardens feel that attracting and retaining volunteers is difficult.
- Capital Growth's 2024 annual members survey, 38% were concerned about a lack of funding for or access to materials (in 2023 this was 46%)
- In 2023 44% were concerned about funding for staff

“Been going for 17+ yrs and still not continual funding for long term projects like this one. Due to short term/ low funding unable to hire more staff to complete local engagement work i.e. managing volunteers. Had various staff leave due to this.”

Lack of coordination and network infrastructure

Capital Growth continues to provide a one stop shop, signposting as well as a regional and national voice but our resources have been severely cut and currently, we are not receiving any funding from our main previous funder or the GLA. We are at a high risk of not continuing beyond March '25 meaning a loss of a critical asset and beacon project for London.

While many groups access funding and are engaging in food growing, many are not aware of the support and other initiatives and therefore 'reinvent the wheel'. Over 60% of gardens find Capital Growth's support useful or very useful in encouraging councils to recognise the value of community gardens, helping gardens be better protected and more resilient, and creating opportunities for people from different backgrounds to get involved in community growing.

Where local networks exist – finding information and practical support is easier e.g. Tower Hamlets (WEN), Lambeth (Incredible Edible), Barnet (Incredible Edible), Grow Lewisham, Union of Hackney Gardens and Waltham Forest Food Growers Network. although they also have to access funding and some of these networks are dormant or operating with a skeleton staffing due to lack of funds. Some are also voluntarily led, so support may not be consistent, but Capital Growth works to fill in the gaps in this provision.

A. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?

One in five (or 9.6 million) Britons do not have access to enough green space. Black people and people of colour are twice as likely to have minimal access to green space.

We are aware of particular barriers for Black and People of Colour in access land to lead projects. This is related to networks of influence and the often informal ways that land becomes available, and the lack of clarity on how to attain land. Whilst people involved in food growing are very ethnically diverse, those leading the projects, especially in paid positions are typically white.

- Reports by BPOC groups and organisations highlight overt and systemic racism provide barrier for BPOC groups accessing land and resources for growing.
- Lack of transparent processes for accessing land and resources lead to a “who you know” culture where those who are connected to those in positions of influence are the ones to gain access.
- BPOC growers have expressed a need for exclusively BPOC-led growing spaces and networks to support with training and advocacy [Reflections on Rootz Into Food Growing 2023 report](#)

“There is still an unfilled gap, for a London-based, Black-led organisation of food growers and food sovereignty advocates. Indeed, the reach of Roots into Food Growing was entirely unique as a majority of RiFG members did not previously belong to any other network.”

This exclusion may not be exclusively felt by people identifying as BPOC and may also apply to younger people, or those with less engagement with services.

Often the entry point into working in urban food growing is through volunteering, and even once skills and experience have been gained, the paid work in the sector is often low-paid and part time. This creates a bias toward people with the financial means to support themselves through volunteer and low-paid work. This is a significant barrier in London where rents and cost of living are particularly high.

b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?

This is variable but generally it is difficult to access land that is suitable for growing for both community projects and for urban/ peri-urban farms where people may want to grow food and run activities to generate income (although notable that most is not- for-profit or would not yield high returns so investment is not an option)

- Contaminated ground is often an issue that means raised beds must be constructed instead of growing directly into the ground. This adds to the costs for materials and soil.

- Council land – allotment waiting lists are very long in many boroughs and other potential local authority land can be hard to access. It is not clear who in the council to approach to ask for land.
- Larger scale land – ‘hope value’ for development means land in the green belt that would be useful for larger projects is held by councils and developers, and is becoming degraded due to land banking practices. Additionally, a lot has already been lost to development – CPRE’s research shows that

“currently, [thousands of hectares of productive farmland are being lost to development](#), with much of this on Green Belt land. Good quality fields are being taken over by corporate housebuilders and developers who do not see the wider social and environmental value of the Green Belt”

- There is so much potential to use land for nature-friendly food growing and to boost the green economy in the outer parts of London. A GLA report in 2010 said “Commercial agriculture is one of the best and most productive land uses in the Green Belt. The benefits include: opportunities for local job creation, regeneration, preservation and management of green space, providing healthy locally produced food and the potential for improving food security.”

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/archives/archive-hive-assembly-reports-plansd-growing-food.pdf

- Access to land for growing identified as major barrier for BPOC (documented in LION’s [Jumping Fences Report](#) – see above)

c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?

Transferable skills: In addition to horticulture there are a number of transferable skills and training required:

- Community Organising
- Fundraising and access to resources
- Enterprise skills – selling produce and more importantly other income streams

e.g. paid events, workshops, partnerships

Routes to Work: Food Growing represents an opportunity to build and link into adult education and develop transferable skills leading to work or employment.

https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/roots_to_work/

Our 2024 survey showed that roughly 4,526 people not in employment are involved in volunteering, apprenticeships and training across the Capital Growth network. And that the Capital Growth network reach includes:

- 24,225 volunteers
- 17,266 additional corporate volunteers
- 1,103 trainees
- 39,765 school pupils taking part in school activities

Partnership working: Another requirement is partnership working, development of ideas and organising infrastructure to enable learning, sharing and joining up of resources.

Targeted training: Rootz into Food Growing highlighted the need for a Black-led accredited training programme that speaks to the heritage and cultures of Black people and can offer the level of skills and knowledge to bring growers up to the next level and keep them on the land.

School Food Matters have highlighted the need and opportunity to engage with education and to provide specialist training for teachers:

“A key way the GLA can help overcome food growing challenges, is through providing additional funding for teacher training. Teachers are at the centre of engaging with children and shaping their experience with local food growing. They are instrumental in teaching an important life skill that children can use for years to come.”

A report from the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation found the Secondary food teachers raised concerns about a lack of specialist food teachers. Some reported a trend towards food education being delivered by teachers whose specialisms were in other areas but had been asked to teach food education. ([Source](#))

2. Are the benefits of local food growing sufficiently recognised and valued by current policies?

Sustain’s Good Food for all Londoners report – highlights leadership among councils. Last year 16 councils achieved good practice and eight received a leadership score for prioritising activities to enable Londoners to grow their own. And while there has been more local leadership post pandemic this is at risk of budget cuts.

The Inter-Council Network (a group convened by Capital Growth of council officers and councillors working in or interested in furthering food growing who meet quarterly) suggests that while councils are interested, they are not all using planning frameworks or investing resources in food growing.

Another challenge is that food growing does not have its own department and sits across multiple policy areas – public health, parks, climate change, community development and regeneration. This can make it difficult for councils to allocate budget and dedicated officer time.

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

- The London Plan – set the scene. Many value this recognition to engage with councils.
- Local plans: For many years Planning guidance and SPG existed for new developments but Sustain have never been able to monitor whether these were implemented and suspect they have not been.
- Below we highlight examples of
 - Local plans
 - Councils leveraging in funding
 - Councils investing in support and development

Good practice of food growing in local plan: Camden:

[Camden Councils Local Plan](#) – comprehensive approach to food system. The key missions in Make Camden for the Local Plan are: **Food: By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food.**

Local Plan Strategic objectives are: To promote health and well-being and reduce physical and mental health inequalities through good design and place making; improving access to nature; enabling affordable healthy food choices; supporting people to lead healthy and active lifestyles; and improving access to healthcare. They also have a policy on food growing as well as several others of relevance

Directly relevant policies in Camden Local Plan:

Policy DS1: Delivering Healthy and Sustainable Development

Policy SC1: Improving health and wellbeing (Health Impact Assessments)

Policy SC3 – Open Space (Design and management of public open space & Temporary provision of open space)

Policy SC4 – Food Growing (comprehensive policy)

Policy NE1 – The Natural Environment (Food Growing & Local Green Spaces)

Policy D1 – Achieving Design Excellence (Food Growing)

Policy A1 – Protecting Amenity (Contaminated Land/food growing)

Site allocations (provision or protection food growing space on 2 specific sites)

Appendix 1: Infrastructure schedule (space for food growing from new development)

Good practice of leveraging in additional resources:

- [Hounslow council's Grow for The Future policy](#) – levered in £165k Shared Prosperity funding via a food growing plan
- Waltham Forest via Organiclea have attracted in investment and grants and Tower Hamlets via WEN were successful with a £2.5m climate action fund (lottery)

Good practice of investment / officer time to support food growing

- [Southwark Land Commission](#) and [Southwark Allotment Expansion guarantee](#)

Southwark Council has funded two Food Growing Officer roles who have identified land and developed a pathway for residents to access land, training and resources to develop successful community allotment sites, majority on housing estates. See the case study for more details

- **Kensington & Chelsea Kitchen Garden project:**

The Ecology Service at RBK&C manages 55 community kitchen gardens, supported by a team of four paid Community Gardeners. Installed in housing estates, parks,

hospital grounds and other green spaces, they provide over 650 plots for residents and community groups to use primarily for food growing. The food growing plan for the borough is integrated into the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan and the community kitchen gardens also play a vital role in delivery of other biodiversity targets and resilience to climate change. Working in collaboration with Hammersmith Community Gardens Association, the Community Kitchen Gardens project also delivers a school food growing programme in six primary schools, with plans to double the number of participating schools in 2024.

What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

- Current policy is useful for recognising Target for all London boroughs to have a threshold amount of growing space both for recreational and productive use and ensure supplementary guidance that makes it clear how the land can be accessed.
- Right to Grow commitment – half of our members have said in our annual members survey in 2023 and 2024 that they see [Right to Grow](#) as a priority.
- Ensuring that the London Plan sets the guidance for local plans to including provision in local plans, design codes and SPDs, which would be enhanced by a target per population.

Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

Mayoral commitment and investment through using tools and joining up relevant work streams such as

- [London Food Strategy](#)
- Green Infrastructure funding and Nature Recovery Strategy linking urban food growing as significant for biodiversity and climate mitigation
- Superzones and health work
- GLA Food Team
- Links with the Universal Free School meals
- Support for School Food Matters, Food for Life or other programmes that encourage school growing
- Setting up food growing specific funding as part of green programmes.

Alongside helping access to land be clear, protecting existing sites there are a few key components

- Levering influence over local authorities, Housing Associations and hospital trusts – large amounts of land and are inconsistent with access to this land, ensuring they have a plan for mapping and how residents can access land.

- Supporting grassroots led projects through access to small funding pots/ signposting to other funders and resources, particularly those that are BPOC led which in our experience there are less of.

- Using skills and health budgets to build larger beacon projects in every borough
- Network infrastructure -
- Making commitments to larger scale community farms in London's peri-urban fringe.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

Sustain and other have documented the wide-ranging benefits of supporting food growing.

For a general overview see https://www.sustainweb.org/planning/for_planners/#1 For

health benefits see www.sustainweb.org/growinghealth/evidence/#Evidence

Sustainability & carbon reduction targets and nature recovery

Urban food growing space attracts thousands of invertebrate species and contributes to carbon sequestration and storage. A comparison of UK urban habitats found that allotments and residential gardens were hotspots for pollinators and Brighton & Hove's allotments were found to support 54 times more bees than other council land. They save 17 tonnes of plastic packaging and 62 tonnes of food waste per year, and reduce the city's carbon footprint by 1,050 tonnes.

Other benefits include

- Local, organically grown food reduces embedded carbon from food distribution, and refrigeration with farming being a considerably factor in reduced air quality;
- Food growing spaces help with adaptation to the impacts of Climate change – for example flood alleviation and cool spaces;
- permeable surfaces of food growing spaces and the harvesting of rainwater contribute to sustainable drainage; and
- Community composting schemes can reduce food waste going to landfill and resulting CO₂/methane emissions

Education, skills and enterprise (and regeneration)

Small-scale community food growing and urban agriculture projects can encourage the growth of the local food economy and develop skills and the improved employability amongst participants.

Community food growing spaces provide a learning environment, develop transferable skills that increase employability, encouraging enterprising activity and create viable social enterprises selling to local businesses or directly to the consumer.

Examples of skills and training in horticulture include:

[Future Gardeners horticulture training & apprenticeships](#) [Organiclea](#)

[organic horticulture training](#)

[Capel Manor](#)

Health, wellbeing & healthy food environments

Strong evidence that food growing improves health and wellbeing – both for those engaging in growing as a therapeutic or rehabilitation and for general users who may suffer from conditions that affect health and wellbeing. Evidence includes:

- Defra and the University of Exeter Medical School found that access to green space was favourable for heart rate, blood pressure, vitamin D levels, recuperation rates, maternal outcomes, and reduced prevalence of type 2 diabetes.
- A study in Wales found that 68% of older people who garden meet national physical activity recommendations, compared to just 25% in the wider population.
- Households that participate in community gardening consume 40% more fruits and vegetables per day than those that do not, and are 3.5 times
- Food growing helps create positive food environment supporting healthy behaviours with many of the GLA Superzones choosing to prioritise food growing in their approaches.
- School gardening and food growing programmes lead to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for school-aged children and hold promise in preventing modern public health problems like food insecurity, childhood obesity.

(Source)

- Our network via our annual members survey gardens overwhelmingly told us that their spaces provide welcoming experiences with positive impacts on their communities: 95% report they provided access to green space and nature, 93% support health and wellbeing and 80% provide access to local food.

It can also save the public purse:

- A project in Wandsworth saved an estimated £113,748-£500,223 for the NHS after participants reported an improvement in their health. Peri-urban farms have been found to produce a [£3 return on every £1](#) invested in social benefits and food production.

Food security, access and economic fairness

In our [Fringe Farming report](#) we calculated that converting just **1%** of peri-urban land to agroecological market gardening* would lead to over **530K tonnes** of fruit and vegetables, or **£3B** in value of production, and **160K FTE** jobs.

While food growing cannot overcome poverty, it can improve food security and provide green jobs. Involvement in community food growing initiatives can also improve soft

skills of cooking and healthy eating and stronger community connections – many urban food growing sites in our network are connected to food banks, community kitchens and wrap-around services that support beneficiaries with accessing benefits, training and jobs.

Community food growing spaces

- foster community cohesion and inclusion
- improving the local area and contributing to successful regeneration.

Greater London Authority Ref No. LFG003

GLA Health, Children & Young Londoners team submission to the Environment Committee investigation into Food Growing on 16 October 2024

Background

- The Healthy Place, Healthy Weight mission was one of nine missions established during the last term, by the Mayor and London Councils to rebuild London's economy and society following the COVID 19 pandemic. From 2022 to 2024 this mission worked with partners to tackle the high rates of child unhealthy weight using a place-based approach that aimed to make local environments healthier so that it is easier for children and their families to eat healthier food and be more active. The mission included a strong focus on the food environment as food is a key driver of weight.
- The benefits of food growing have been well documented with extensive scientific literature demonstrating the benefits of gardening and community food growing for both physical and mental health¹. These benefits include physical activity and fitness, increasing healthy fruit and vegetable consumption, improving young people's attitudes to healthy eating, promoting social interaction, the development of new skills, volunteering, and increasing connections with nature and the outdoors. It also contributes to climate-friendly behaviour.
- The key initiatives related to food growing, supported by the HPHW mission, were:
 - Capital Growth Programme
 - School Superzones
 - Good Food Local: the London Report

I. Capital Growth Programme

- This is led by Sustain (more information on the organisation can be found in Appendix 1).
- Sustain gave evidence of food growing's role in resilience at the London Assembly Environment Committees in February and July 2024.
- Capital Growth is London's largest food growing network, promoting and supporting urban food growing across the capital. Its vision is that everyone should have the opportunity to grow food as part of a healthy, resilient food system.

- Since its launch in 2008 Capital Growth has supported over 4,000 food growing gardens covering every borough, reached over 150,000 Londoners and engaged over 22 local authorities in food growing.
- Capital Growth has been supported by London Food Link, the Mayor of London and City Bridge Trust.
- **Funding:** From 2021 to 2024 the HPHW mission provided total funding of £35,000 to Sustain for Capital Growth comprising £20,000 in 2021/22 and £15,000 in 2023/24 to support:
 - Policy, communications, promotion and advocacy
 - Work with targeted London councils to identify land and support for local growing networks.
 - Capacity building such as training sessions, the Spotlight Garden Programme and support to local networks.
 - Data and evidence building
 - developing offer to schools, better understand teachers' support needs and connect with more schools including Superzone schools.
 - delivering training sessions in schools, updating resources and developing new resources for working with children with special educational needs in food growing and an expanding bank of lesson plans

II. School Superzones

- These were place-based interventions around schools in areas of the greatest disadvantage. They aim to protect children's health and enable healthy behaviours through the place-shaping powers of local authorities and local partnership working.
- **Funding:** In the period from 2022 to 2024 the Mayor invested £1.9m to expand School Superzones across London. Funding of £1.5 million was awarded to 28 boroughs for 51 local programmes that comprise 86 Superzone schools. The remaining funding has covered an evaluation, grant management and coordination.
- Most of the delivery is planned to be completed by December 2024, with some projects expected to be completed by March 2025.
- In order to receive a grant of up to £30,000 boroughs had to select a geographical area around a school or cluster of schools across which the Superzone would be established; ensure the

school was supportive of School Superzone activity and commit to improving at least two of seven health determinants.

1. Active travel.
 2. Air quality.
 3. Food and drink environment.
 4. Community safety.
 5. Access to green space (this includes food growing and installation of green infrastructure in and around the school)
 6. Planning and licensing.
 7. Tobacco and alcohol.
- Many schools recognise the benefits of food growing, which include enhanced student well-being, educational opportunities, and a connection with nature, but it is often left to a passionate teacher as an extra activity, and inevitably sidelined during busy times. At the same time, London's demand for locally grown food is on the rise and skilled growers are seeking spaces to cultivate. The School Superzones grant enabled schools to address some of these challenges and develop new food growing projects.
 - As the grants of up to £30,000 for each Superzone programme could cover a range of different interventions it is not possible to say how much in total has been spent on food growing.
 - Around fifteen School Superzone grant programmes have included work on food growing. Some examples are included in appendix 2.

III. **Good Food Local: The London Report**

- The report is coordinated by the [Good Food Local](#) and [Food Poverty](#) teams at Sustain. The report was previously called [Good Food for All Londoners](#), but was rebranded this year to align with Sustain's UK-wide work to benchmark councils' action on food.
- This annual report produced by Sustain is an important benchmarking tool, which tracks councils' progress on good food each year, celebrates successes and highlights what work still needs to be done.
- The report includes council action to support more Londoners to grow their own food, increase land available for growing and build a local good food movement and platform community voices.

- **Funding:** Total of £24,000 over three financial years from 2021/22 to 2023/24 (£8,000 each year) to support production of the report.

Appendix 1

Information on the organisation Sustain

- [Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming](#) advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, tackle climate change and restore nature, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote greater equality. Sustain represents around 100 national public interest organisations, and cultivates the movement for change, working with many others at local, regional, national and international levels.
- Sustain believes everyone should have access to affordable, healthy and sustainably produced food that protects people and the planet. To work towards these goals they:
 - Develop networks to design and implement projects and campaigns, and to provide a platform to recognise and replicate pioneering work.
 - Run campaigns, networks and demonstration projects, to promote permanent changes in policy and practice, and to help equip more people and communities with skills as change-makers.
 - Advise and negotiate with national and local government and other decision-makers to ensure that legislation and policies on food and agriculture are publicly accountable and socially and environmentally responsible.
 - Offer in-kind support to people who grow their own food in London, including providing access to discounted training and tools, networking events, and support with growing to sell.

Appendix 2

Examples of food growing in School Superzones

Newham: Royal Docks Academy

- This Superzone, which was awarded funding in July 2023 and is still running, is supporting a partnership between Royal Docks Academy, which benefits from approximately 7000m² of green space, and [OrganicLea](#) to establish a commercial farm at the school. This aims to serve educational purposes, meet local food demands, and be sustainable for decades.
- Newham is using their grant of £30,000 to cover the costs of setting up the farm including the polytunnels, watering systems, compost, and tools.

The ongoing running costs, including a professional gardener, will need to be covered by the income generated through selling food and plants.

- [OrganicLea](#) and [Real Farming Trust](#) are supporting the development of a clear business model. The farm will grow high-value crops (like salads, tomatoes and edible flowers) to sell to a high-end restaurant chain who have expressed interest in buying all the produce.
- The aim is that a group of students will regularly come to the farm for enrichment sessions. Student involvement will be practical with groups coming for one hour every week. The farm will include some kind of vocational training or summer apprenticeship for a few students. The expectation is that well-planned student involvement will increase the likelihood of this project succeeding.

Bexley Zone 3: Peareswood Primary School, St Pauls (Slade Green) Primary School, Haberdashers' Slade Green Primary School.

- This Superzone was awarded funding in 2022 and the work on food growing has been completed. Community gardening, planting and food growing were selected as priorities following engagement with the schools in Slade Green & North End. Additional funds of £10,000 were also secured via LB Bexley Health Inequality Programme to support this work which is co-produced by the schools and the communities around the schools.
- The funds have enabled more ambitious and sustainable interventions such as supporting the start-up of Peareswood Community Hub (including a community fridge), enhancing the impact of the project with the long-term view of reducing health inequalities.
- The work has included forest school training for all schools; Developing a wellbeing garden and growing space in Northwood and beehives, growing space, planters and outdoor learning in Willow Bank.

Sutton: Wallington Primary School

- This School Superzone received funding in 2022 and the work on food growing has been completed.
- Staff received training from a local organisation and the school garden was incorporated into the curriculum. Special educational needs pupils were involved in the work. Links were made with catering to promote the use of a new salad bar and take up of universal Free School Meals.

Enfield: Raynham Primary School

- This School Superzone received funding in 2022 and the work on food growing has been completed.
- Redesigned areas of the school grounds where air quality was particularly poor. Created greener, healthier playgrounds for outdoor learning and play, combined with edible playgrounds. They transformed school grounds into outdoor teaching gardens, inspiring hands-on learning to get children excited about outdoor growing and eating healthy food.

Incredible Edible Lambeth Ref No. LFG004

1. What are the main barriers to local food growing in London?

In order to more effectively advocate for food growing, Incredible Edible Lambeth has been involved in two projects that have identified barriers to food growing in London:

* A Framework for Food Growing with Arup (2022-23): see slides summarising barriers and solutions [here](#)

* Open University project in 2023-4: see our final report summarising barriers and solutions [here](#)

Broadly speaking, the barriers to local food growing are:

- Difficulties in securing land (knowing where land is available for food growing, securing permission and leases etc). It is particularly difficult to secure long leases as councils can see the land as a potential opportunity for them to generate income. This can lead to uncertainty and difficulty raising funds for investment in spaces for growers.
- Lack of policies supporting food growing, which in turn leads to a lack of institutional support and funding for food growing
- Lack of joined up working at local and national level on food growing across the local authority and community. Lack of a main point of contact for food growing. Inconsistent approach by different departments eg legal and property departments can penalise small groups with attempts to secure commercial rents (particularly when a project has succeeded in improving the land) or attempting to pass on legal liability for managing the space
- Insecure and inadequate funding for food growing
- Lack of skills, connections and resources for food growing

In particular:

a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity

People who face inequalities based on age, income and ethnicity will face greater barriers to food growing eg they will find it more difficult to navigate complex bureaucracies; they may find it more difficult to access funding and they may need capacity building to help manage their groups. Many people that grow food are older, from minority communities and many have mental and/or physical disabilities – the latter particularly meaning they need additional support in food growing, both physically and with social/organisational issues.

Learning from the US – Black Urban Growers conference in Philadelphia 2023 – black growers have a specific history and needs when it comes to food growing.

IEL has supported a bid to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund for support to develop a network of support for Black and People of Colour in 2024 – 2027. This includes creating spaces for people to share their experiences, learn from one another and to amplify the impact and experience of BPOC growers.

b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?

It's easy sometimes to adopt a piece of land and just begin growing on it; the problem is that it's insecure and difficult to gain formal permission. There is no formal agreement for food growing in Lambeth.

c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?

Horticultural skills are important but almost the most important skills are social and organisational. Many people are running food growing projects in challenging circumstances eg on housing estates where there can be high levels of conflict. Many people have not run an organisation before and do not have the social skills or experience to do this. Many people need support in understanding and accessing bureaucracies. IEL provides training in everything from composting to food growing, non-violent communication and communications. We have applied to City Bridge for a programme of support to our 120 groups that includes outreach - we want to have the capacity to really understand the needs of local food growers and to work with them to codesign a programme of capacity building.

2. Are the benefits of local food growing sufficiently recognised and valued by current policies? In particular:

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

Southwark - employing two community food growing officers

[New York Green Thumb programme](#): full financial and governance support for 550 food growing spaces

[Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan: Growing From The Root](#): a fantastic, detailed plan to right wrongs over land and achieve land justice for BIPOC growers. Created and implemented by Ash Richards from within Philadelphia's

b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

Make it obligatory to include food growing spaces in all housing developments

c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

GLA to create an Urban Agriculture Plan for London

GLA to create onus on local authorities to create Urban Agriculture Plans

Support [Right to Grow](#) - the movement needs resources and infrastructure to fully understand what Right to Grow would look like in London, and to engage food growers in making this a reality

Funding! There is so little funding available for food growing. IEL is continually under threat and cannot fulfil the potential of food growing because of insecure funding. Groups tell us that they need resources, connection to one another and upskilling and there is virtually no funding for any of these.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

As created by Incredible Edible CIC as part of the Right to Grow campaign:

[Full Report](#)

[Summary](#)

Other evidence of the benefits of food growing:

Evidence from Sustain: Many of our food growing reports include a justification section eg

<https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/councils-food-growing-april-2021/>

More links to evidence here <https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/may23-sustain-briefing-on-community-cultivation/>

There is also this which was developed by CAWR and some of our CSAs have used:

<https://www.social-impact-toolkit.com/>

[fph-food-and-trees-11mar24-v2.pdf](#)

Here is the study from Birmingham as well - <https://bdacallotments.co.uk/2024/06/13/a-neglected-asset-allotments-in-birmingham/> which provides an extensive review of the allotments activity in the city, providing information on the benefits of food growing and further recommendations for action.

The Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation carried out a piece of research that might be of interest. It focussed on the benefits of allotments across food, health and environment and although the primary purpose was to demonstrate that rather than being a drain on council budgets, allotments actually bring savings when you factor in costs across council services such as health, climate and nature emergencies etc.

<https://www.bhaf.org.uk/content/about/issues/the-financial-value-benefits-of-allotments>

OrganicLea Ref No. LFG005

1. What are the main barriers to local food growing in London? In particular:

a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?

The cost of living, particularly housing, is a big barrier to people developing food growing livelihoods, which are relatively very low paid.. As an SME employing 25+ people it is by far the biggest cause of staff turnover.

The main reason why the vast majority of Londoners don't grow a small amount of food is lack of know-how and confidence to do it.

b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?

Almost everyone could be growing at least a container or window box with chillies, garlic, tomatoes, or herbs, this is very affordable and at scale could make a difference to the food footprint of London. Accessing land for commercial production, or to grow significant amounts for own consumption requires an allotment or larger space. With regards to commercial growing this is unaffordable as the returns on food are too low to justify the investment of time and capital, and the tenure arrangements for new growers are often very precarious.

c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?

To create a movement of Londoners growing a small portion of their own food there needs to be support in terms of materials and handholding for many people to overcome initial inertia. Each street / estate could have volunteer residents trained to support fellow residents to grow something they can then eat. This would need paid coordinators / facilitators.

OrganicLea's experience of delivering horticulture training shows that informal or entry level courses are enough to get people growing some of their own, but for those wanting to include food growing as part of their livelihood there is a need to give people work based training up to at least Level 2 City and Guilds. Interest in jobs in food growing currently mainly comes from people wanting to change careers, or relatively new graduates wanting to develop an environmentally positive livelihood. There is scope to promote food growing as a rewarding Green Job so that training in the sector is considered by many more young and older people, rather than just those that have 'seen the light'. This could then link to T Levels and Apprenticeships. The training needs to be appropriate focusing on practical experience that makes people ready for employment.

2. Are the benefits of local food growing sufficiently recognised and valued by current policies?

In particular:

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

Some of the Food Partnerships do acknowledge the importance of food growing when taking a holistic view of the local food economy

b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

The glasshouses in West Ham Park should be retained for food growing rather than sold off for housing.by the Corporation of London

Green Infrastructure plans should include utilising land to grow food for Londoners and there needs to be food growing training opportunities as part of the Adult Learning offer to build capacity to create this Green Infrastructure.

As above, encouraging local authorities with farm land to utilise it in a way that produces food for London would help create jobs and make London more resilient in terms of food supply

c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

If opportunities are created, ideas will flow, '. While we could wait for the government or charities to come and help, we want to reclaim our ability to support ourselves. Some 2,000 hectares of Waltham Forest are private gardens. Taking Waltham Forest's own gardening social media influencer Alessandro Vitale's ('Spicy Moustache') garden yields as a benchmark, we could grow almost half the amount of food we need, worth roughly £700million'.

See: <https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/07/01/how-waltham-forest-can-feed-itself/>

Markets for local food will support local food production in London, but the reality is that those markets would mostly be supplied from beyond London. So the GLA should work closely with counties in the SE and E Anglia to develop infrastructure across the whole area, with London playing a key role as a market, and a supplier of labour.. A more developed market would then create more opportunities for London growers.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

Training leading to employment in food growing can support the Green Jobs agenda, and wider Adult Learning strategies. Our experience shows that it can be very accessible to people who have been marginalised by the mainstream education system

Organic and agro-ecological principles of food production support biodiversity, flood and drought mitigation, and carbon reduction.

Plant Based Treaty Ref No. LFG006

Call for evidence: Local Growing in London

My name is [personal information redacted for publication], and I am a Plant Based Treaty campaigner for London, based in Chingford. I am writing in response to the “Call for evidence: Local Food Growing in London” to encourage the London Environment Committee to make policy recommendations that expand access to community gardens across the city and make increased consumption of fruits and vegetables a priority to improve the health and wellbeing of Londoners and reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Plant Based Treaty

The Plant Based Treaty initiative aims to promote a shift towards a just, plant-based food system that would enable us to live safely within our planetary boundaries and reforest the Earth. Modelled on the Fossil Fuel Treaty, the campaign is building bottom-up pressure to secure a global Plant Based Treaty attached to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to transform the food system. A second priority is for towns, cities, and their institutions to implement best practices in plant-based food policies andrewilding.

The Plant Based Treaty proposes a treaty based on three core principles that would 1. Halt further deforestation and expansion of animal agriculture, 2. Shift policies and resources towards promoting and expanding access to plant-based food, and 3. Rewilding and restoring key ecosystems and shifting land ownership into community hands so it can be repurposed for community food gardens and allotments to help build resilient, local food systems.

Support for a Plant Based Treaty

Plant Based Treaty is supported by over 200,000 individuals, including more than 1,000 councillors and MPs, climate scientists, Nobel Laureates, medical practitioners, and celebrities.

3,000 groups and businesses have endorsed it, including the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, Ecotricity, and chapters of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

30 towns and cities have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty, helping create pressure for countries to negotiate a global treaty. Many are working on meaningful policy changes including Edinburgh, Belfast, Norwich, Haywards Heath, Exmouth, and the first London Borough, Lambeth.

Benefits of food growing

Local food growing schemes offer benefits for both individuals and the environment. It promotes physical activity, enhances mental well-being, increases access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and contributes to well-maintained public spaces. Gardening on an allotment or in a community garden also fosters stronger community bonds, reduces social isolation, and creates opportunities for collaboration and celebration with neighbours.

Current state

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only one in three adults eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.¹ Increasing fruit and

¹ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-2023_7a7afb35-en

vegetable consumption will lower the risk of disease and also help meet our climate commitments under the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C.

A recent Nature Food study found that even if the UK achieved the diet recommended by the Eatwell Guide, we would still breach our planetary boundaries. The study went on to suggest the Eatwell Guide by Plant Based Health Professionals as a solution.

Getting Londoners growing should be a top priority for London as it will play a key role in creating the dietary shifts needed.

Identifying good practices in action

The Plant Based Treaty UK team emailed councillors from all 32 London Borough Councils and individual councillors who have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty nationwide, asking them to complete a survey about council policies and food growing schemes in the areas they represent. Here is a summary of the responses we received:

London Boroughs

Waltham Forest

- Good practices in place:
 - Old garage site and car parks are being used for food growing such as:
 - Good Shepherd Studios, Davies Lane, E11
 - Harvey Rd Garage Site, Harvey Rd, E11
 - Subdividing traditionally large allotments into smaller plots.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Identifying sites for new traditional allotments to address growing demand.

Richmond upon Thames

- Good practices in place:
 - The borough's Climate Emergency Strategy LP32 mentions local allotment gardening for locally grown food.
 - The provision of new allotments and food growing spaces is encouraged.
 - Policy LP30 (Encouragement for the provision of food growing space) also recognises the value of locally-produced healthy food and in growing food oneself.
 - Green roofs can provide opportunities to grow food, which is supported by Policy LP17.
 - The Council is talking to social housing partners and hoping local residents will suggest projects and be enthusiastic to take them forward. The Council has a small grant available to assist residents with projects.
 - There are over 2,000 allotment spaces spread over 24 sites whose primary purpose is food growing.
 - Site inspections take place to ensure plots are being cultivated appropriately and that neglected plots are improved or re-allocated.
 - Have a community allotment at Grey Court School and a market garden at St Richard's School, in Ham.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Long waiting lists and limited resources.

Lambeth

- Good practices in place:
 - Local Food Growing Policy (EN2) encourages the use of land and buildings for food growing, including new allotments, orchards, and community gardens.
 - Lambeth Urban Forest Strategy (2023-2030) aims to increase tree stock and canopy cover, including the planting of fruit trees on public and private lands.
 - Habitat Action Plan focuses on improving biodiversity in private gardens and growing spaces.
 - Training and funding for volunteer organisations involved in food growing.
 - Promotion of community apple days and other harvest activities.
 - Incorporation of food growing in public spaces like hospitals, schools, and derelict lands.
 - Support from Public Health and Climate Change teams for food growing initiatives.
 - Active involvement of groups like Incredible Edible Lambeth and the Lambeth Food Partnership.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Due to being a densely populated, urban area, available space for food growing is limited. Currently only 0.8% of the borough's land is dedicated to food growing.
 - Private gardens and smaller community growing spaces lack the same level of protection as public parks, making them susceptible to neglect and loss.
 - The pressing need for housing and school expansions often takes precedence over maintaining or expanding allotment sites.
 - Lambeth has a low allotment-to-population ratio, with only 15 working sites for a population of 320,000.
 - As an inner London borough, Lambeth is not legally required to provide statutory allotments, impacting the availability and expansion of food growing spaces.

Camden

- Good practices in place:
 - A Food Growing Officer has been hired to work on developing policies aiming to create the internal structures to better support food growing, whilst creating a level of standardisation that will enable scaling.
 - New draft Local Plan includes a requirement for new developments to incorporate allotment spaces. The following wording is included in the draft Local Plan: *“Seek to secure the provision of suitable space for on-site food growing by residents as part of all major housing and mixed-use developments.”*
 - Working towards creating guidance on encouraging best environmental practices on food growing sites to increase biodiversity and enable more successful food growing.
 - Supported the installation and maintenance of raised beds and growing spaces across a large number of estates in Camden.
 - Though not yet widespread, some schools have integrated food growing into their curriculums.
 - The Story Garden at the British Library is an example of the use of a space for food growing.
- Barriers to overcome:

- Internal structures for the management of food growing spaces are currently held across various teams causing challenges in both scaling and management of ongoing issues in growing spaces.
- Maintenance and associated costs of sustaining food-growing spaces. No budget has been ring fenced for the maintenance of food growing spaces specifically.
- Logistical challenges in current food growing sites and in developing new ones:
 - Provision of water
 - Soil testing for contamination
 - Accessibility of growing spaces
 - Health and safety of structures put in place by residents
 - Anti-social behaviour at food growing sites
- Management and allocation of food-growing plots overseen by Tenant and Resident Associations and residents requires ongoing support from the council.
- High demand for allotment spaces has resulted in a significant waiting list for many residents, with our current provision not able to meet current demand.

Hackney

- Good practices in place:
 - The Council's local plan (LP33) has a policy LP46 Protection and Enhancement of Green Infrastructure criteria G states that 'The Council will protect existing allotments and support the provision of new food growing spaces'.
 - Within Hackney-managed estates there are around 55 resident-led community gardens, most of which are growing food. Outside of estates, there are 9 allotment sites managed by the Hackney Allotment Society, containing approximately 130 plots. Not only do these growing spaces contribute to improve access to fresh produce, increase resident capacity and enhance underutilised spaces, they also contribute to biodiversity and support to offset carbon emissions in the borough.
 - The Council's Climate Action Plan includes an objective to "Procure sustainable and healthy foods in the Council's spaces" and an action to "increase levels of food growing in housing open spaces, and schools".
 - The Parks Green Strategy policy aims to implement three food growing projects on Hackney estates annually. The "Grown in Hoxton" initiative received a £43,000 grant in 2022/2023.
 - During the same period, a collaborative effort with "Groundwork London" resulted in the construction of a garden at Frampton Park Estate, featuring 12 raised beds, compost bays, and a shed. Community feedback from the Parks Green Strategy Overview found that 12% of residents wanted the Council to provide education, skills and events linked to food growing, gardening and nature. As such the Council introduced a manifesto commitment to introduce three food growing projects on housing estates every year, for 10 years, to provide community spaces in which people can come together to learn and collaborate.
 - Hackney is a lead of the "Food Purchasing Commitment", a key initiative within London Councils' One World Living programme, aimed at transforming London's food system to be more sustainable and climate-friendly.
 - The Council are the freeholders for nine allotment sites with a total of 125 full plots.
 - School gardening programmes and community workshops led by external organisations

also contribute to increased knowledge around food production, healthy eating, and plant-based diets from young people to elderly residents.

- Organisations such as 'Made in Hackney' conduct workshops and lessons around food foraging and plant-based cooking and often tailor their classes to suit different cuisines to improve accessibility for residents from different backgrounds.
- In January 2023 Hackney passed a motion to make it a Right to Food borough.
- For a list of examples of food growing in city-run establishments and food-growing organisations, see below.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Demand for the establishment of new growing projects currently exceeds capacity.
 - Land availability: Hackney is a very densely populated inner-London borough meaning that land is scarce and available soil may need to be checked for contamination prior to development. In the event where land becomes available, there may also be competing land-use requirements in line with the Council's priorities and balancing the need for affordable housing, transport, and commercial development.
 - Equitable access: Once established, growing spaces also must ensure equitable access for diverse communities, including those from marginalised groups (those with disabilities for example), and overcoming language or cultural barriers, so it is important to carefully consider equality assessments throughout the planning process.
 - Preservation of growing spaces, which must have a dedicated personnel or team to ensure long-term maintenance and upkeep of the allotment.
 - Funding constraints. *(Hackney is continued on page 19)*

City of London

- Good practices in place:
 - The 'Golden Baggers' community garden in the Golden Lane Estate (<http://www.goldenlaneestate.org/page/edible-golden-lane>),
 - Fleet Street Quarter (BID) Urban Farm (<https://www.fleetstreetquarter.co.uk/four-key-strategic-themes>)
- Barriers to overcome:
 - The compact and competitive nature of space within the Square Mile means that it is usually not commercially viable to undertake food growing at scale.
 - The City of London also has a relatively small residential population - although they are heavily involved with greening and growing food in the communal spaces where they live.
 - Where local food growing has taken place it usually occurs in underutilised spaces and primarily for community benefits rather than profit.

Lewisham

- Good practices in place:
 - In April 2023 Lewisham launched its Food Justice Action Plan to combat food insecurity which incorporates an objective to promote and develop opportunities for community food growing.
 - The council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2020-2025 commits to the ongoing management of allotments as vital resources for community food growing.
 - Lewisham recently won a Silver Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Award for its work to promote healthy, sustainable, and local food. Lewisham's SFP Action Plan aims to

increase and improve food growing in the borough through working with community gardens and allotments, households, and by providing schools with training and resources. ([More information in the action plan on pages 28-30](#)).

- The survey identified the following top five priorities in order of popularity:
 - More support for growing locally by reducing allotment waiting times and identifying new growing areas.
 - Food procurement to support sustainable local food provision.
 - Tackling the climate emergency by supporting locally grown and sourced seasonal food.
 - Supporting food growing in schools.
 - More action on food waste.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - With fewer officers, less money and mounting future challenges, the Council cannot do all that it once did.
 - Developing community food growing opportunities for residents requires additional officer resources and/or time to deliver but no officer time nor any additional resources are currently available to support the setting up of new community gardening spaces.

East Herts District Council

- Good practices in place:
 - There are policies relating to allotment allocations per household for new builds.
 - The allocation of land for allotments. We also have developments based on Garden Town principles. This means that the land is owned by the community who can determine how it is used.
 - There is a willingness for local communities to encourage local food production.

Barking and Dagenham

- Good practices in place:
 - The Council's [Draft Local Plan](#) policies SP6 and DMNE6 support the retention and new development of allotments and community food growing areas.
 - Within the draft Local Plan, the council has committed to supporting community food growing and supporting communities that aspire to designate Local Green Spaces.
 - Proposals for new allotments will be supported where there is a demonstrable local need.
 - Food growing is encouraged as a meanwhile use on vacant or underutilised land.
 - Major resident-led developments are expected to provide community food growing opportunities and to provide a strategy for the ongoing management of this.
 - New community food growing areas should include access for disabled residents, access to water and irrigation, and access to composting facilities.
 - Within Barking and Dagenham, 42 community food growing projects have been initiated in schools, care homes, housing estates and communal areas during the last eight years.
 - Community researchers spoke to over 500 residents and businesses and found that 85% of residents want more food growing spaces, training opportunities, and activities in their local area.
 - From January to July 2023, School Food Matters worked with schools to deliver food

growing and enterprise programmes. 170 students and 32 teachers and teaching assistants took part in the projects across 11 schools. One school was so successful at growing and selling produce that they abandoned their plans to turn their growing plot into a car park.

- The Good Food Growers are a community-led project supporting diverse, inclusive, and community-led food growing.
- A community compost network was set up between a council-run food club for residents facing insecurity, and therapeutic gardening supporting residents with disabilities.
- An online training workshop was set up for local organisations wanting to start new food growing projects.
- An audit was carried out on community orchards in the borough's parks and a workshop on how to reactivate them to support residents to use them.
- A group of black women residents set up a project to grow culturally appropriate crops and save the seeds.
- We are aware of 14 community growing projects and at least 15 school food growing spaces. We also have 16 well used allotment sites, run by allotment societies.
- Partnered with School Food Matters for the last two years, offering 12 schools the opportunity to take part in growing and enterprise programmes, growing produce at school and then selling it at Barking market.
- The organisations that have led the recent Good Food Growers project are Company Drinks, Fruitful Orchard, and Thames Life.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Lack of access to land as well as cultural barriers to people accessing allotments or green spaces. Generally people feel there isn't enough information on how to access sites for growing.
 - Funding to cover the time to run food growing projects and a lack of experts to advise on setting sites up, or local training opportunities.
 - Residents are not always sure if they can adapt gardens to grow food at home, particularly those in the private rented sector.
 - One grower identified the need for more culturally inclusive outdoor programmes, as well as initiatives to include older and disabled people.

Redbridge

- Good practices in place:
 - Promote growing your own at events and home composting with schemes in place to support.
 - Support community gardens with the growing scheme agreed with the council. Some of these gardens include food growing.
 - Have supported two community orchards with one in place and one to go in this winter.
 - Ran a promotion giving away fruit trees in 2021.
 - Two schools with very active eco-clubs/committees that grow food on site.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - None that we are aware of.

Newham

- Good practices in place:
 - School-based kitchen gardens. Setting up food growing enterprises at schools.
 - Have developed a model of food growing at schools where schools with lots of green space partner with restaurants who commit to buying all the produce grown at the school. The income from this hires a professional food grower for four days per week.
 - The council funds the initial set-up of the school-based kitchen garden then the agreement with the restaurant allows us to hire the professional food grower.
 - Currently establishing these kitchen gardens at two schools, with a view to two more starting in 2025.
 - Schools can achieve all the associated health and wellbeing benefits of connecting to nature and growing food locally.
 - In Newham alone (a low-green space borough) there are approximately 10 schools that have enough green space to host a food growing enterprise.

Sutton

- Good practices in place:
 - Local plans include sites safeguarded for community food growing.
 - Sutton Community Farm is London's only community-owned fruit and veg farm.
 - The Council's Environment Strategy includes an action to "Support communities' creation of pocket parks, community gardens, food growing, and the 'meanwhile' use of spaces.
 - Community groups can apply for public realm funding through Local Committees, or grants such as the Greener City Fund (GLA).
 - The Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy also includes Policy 11: "The Council will encourage allotment gardening. Allotment gardeners are encouraged to participate in managing and maintaining their site, as individuals and through allotment groups or societies.
 - Encouraging local food growing is addressed under draft Policy 34 of the Council's Local Plan 'Issues and Preferred Options' document which is currently undergoing its first public consultation. Part (b) states the following: "The Council will encourage and support the provision of community-run and managed allotments and community food growing spaces in major new developments where practicable.."
 - Some of the schools within the London Borough of Sutton have allotments and growing food forms part of the curriculum. Some of the schools use this food to contribute to school lunches.
 - Caterlink, who are the meal provider for several schools in Sutton, offer a funding scheme to encourage local food growing. The fund is called the Kitchen Garden Scheme and has previously granted funding to Dorchester Primary.
 - The Council have created an orchard in Belmont Park, consisting of 15 fruit trees. The Council have also assisted Rosehill Park Friends Group with the creation of an orchard within the park, which the friends group maintains.
 - The Council have identified overgrown and unused land within allotment sites and cleared the land so that it can be turned into additional plots.
 - The Council provides local charity EcoLocal with allotment plots free of charge to deliver community food growing projects. The allotment is called Carshalton Community Food Growing Project.

- [Sutton Community Farm](#)
- [Foresters Primary School Gardening Club](#)
- [Eco-Local/Carshalton Community Allotment](#)
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Applying for and securing funding to expand food growing is the main challenge faced by the council. We know from our partnerships with others that local organisations and schools face similar challenges.
 - Competition for land for alternative development.
 - Lack of funding support to enable partnership schemes.
 - External funding is needed.
 - Ongoing costs for maintenance need to be considered together with who is responsible for ongoing maintenance.

Rest of UK

Cornwall

- Good practices in place:
 - Climate Emergency Development Plan Document encourages food growing
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Existing big-business farms who lobby councillors with scare stories about 'food security' while producing single-crop low value food for supermarkets, which is often wasted.
 - The national preference for big-business supermarkets over more complex local food cooperative gives lay consumers an irresistible choice of convenience.

Exmouth

- Good practices in place:
 - Some housing developments offer to provide allotments.
 - Town Council allotments are managed by a committee of plot holders and they offer a training course for new holders.
 - The District Council runs 'Gate to Plate' events.
 - Some schools have small plots or areas and encourage pupils to garden and grow food. Mostly run by parents or volunteers.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - District tends to concentrate on tree planting or maintaining public gardens though some flower beds also have veg or herbs.
 - Derelict land is often privately owned or contaminated.

Havant

- Good practices in place:
 - There is a scheme called 'Grow it, Cook it, Eat it.' which champions community gardens on allotments or bringing allotments back into use.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - There are over 100 people on the waiting list for allotments.
 - Allotments are not being monitored and they are allowed to become overgrown.

Lancaster

- Good practices in place:
 - Local food growing is part of the Morecambe Bay Curriculum with the title '[Where the Wildings Are](#)' and is organised with FoodFutures, currently in 10 district schools.
 - Claver Hill Project is an example of a community project on former derelict agricultural land. The land was bought by private individuals who set it up.
 - A community garden was created in 2011 as part of the Transition City Lancaster 'Fruity Corners' project, using various small pieces of council land, including corners of small parks and housing areas, to plant orchards which are now up to ten years old.

Leeds

- Good practices in place:
 - Working closely with bodies like Incredible Edible.
 - Releasing redundant Council land for community-led food growing.
 - Encouraging developers to include food growing spaces in their plans.
 - Currently supporting schools with various food growing schemes.
 - Incredible Edible is doing well and is successful when it's focused in an area, with local enthusiasts leading.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - In schools, projects often grow and fold based on the presence or not of a particular staff member.
 - Regarding redundant Council land, there is concern amongst other officers that if a given project fails, the Council then have added work to wind up the project. They prefer to keep it simple, rather than risk innovation.

Manchester

- Good practices in place:
 - Breaking up the size of allotments in order to create more availability and cut down waiting times for a plot of land. This has been beneficial to younger people and minorities as well who might be very busy with work and not have a lot of spare time so couldn't manage a full sized allotment, but can manage a smaller one.
 - Platt fields Market Garden in one of our local parks houses two projects - the Gaskell Garden Project (a not-for-profit permaculture project) and MUD (Manchester Urban Diggers). These are both organic and community-run food growing projects.
 - Food growing sessions in primary schools.
 - The Kindling Trust, which is working on setting up an organic farm, has an interesting ethos about re-creating the food system to be sustainable and serve people and the planet.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - It takes a long time and a lot of admin to evict people from allotments they are not using properly.
 - A lot of allotment committees are lacking members or just not functioning properly, so admin is not getting done.

West Oxfordshire

- Good practices in place:
 - [West Oxfordshire Food Action Plan](#).
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Lack of funding and lack of capacity.

Glasgow

- Good practices in place:
 - [Food Growing Strategy 2020 - 2025](#).
 - The City Administration Committee recently approved £400,000 for community growing across 4 derelict sites.
 - The council has some strong partnerships, for example with Glasgow Community Food Network and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, which support residents to grow in their communities.
 - There's an [associated fund](#) which community groups can apply to for support in setting up their growing site.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Community groups and small businesses need to get permission to use land for growing.
 - Scaling up food growing to create and support market gardens.

Sheffield

- Good practices in place:
 - Developed a [food strategy](#) with local partners.
 - Work with local food growers and have recently leased an allotment at [Graves Park to Food Works](#).
 - Food Works' cafe menus and Just Meals ready meals at sites across the city will soon feature nature-friendly fruit, veg and herbs grown in [Graves Park's Norton Nurseries](#) by teams of community growers supported by Food Works.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Capacity and funding is a major barrier.
 - Waste contract with Veolia gives them exclusive rights to collect waste making collecting food waste expensive and means this cannot be used for community composting, even if funding was available.

St Albans

- Good practices in place:
 - Recently a ['Right to Grow' motion](#) (from Incredible Edible) passed at full council which allows for the identification of plots of land that residents can access to grow fruit, vegetables, and flowers.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Funding for surveying pieces of land and officers' time.
 - Sites on areas that in the future may be developed but are currently sitting empty.

Swansea

- Good practices in place:

- Most food growing projects are run in conjunction with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and local Community Gardens who work alongside schools to teach about growing.
- Raised beds built in school playgrounds and used to teach about growing.
- Education Officers from the [Cae Tan CSA](#) work with families in deprived areas to get them growing at home.
- Increasing appetite for community growing, and has proved popular in schools.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Funding.

High Peak

- Good practices in place:
 - Small but heartening projects in many primary schools.
 - Successes include Community Open Green Space in Furness Vale and Serpentine Community Garden in Buxton.
- Barriers to overcome:
 - Funding.

Norwich

When Norwich Council endorsed the Plant Based Treaty, their motion included:

“Work with community groups across the city to continue to promote the establishment of new and appropriate community gardens as part of the biodiversity strategy. Use the developing decontamination of land strategy, especially on sites that have been previously derelict or contaminated, so that these sites can be appropriately assessed and brought back into beneficial use to meet the wider demands posed by the social, economic, and environmental crisis, including that of supporting the growth of cheap and accessible plant-based food and drinks for all our communities.”

Hackney continued....

Are there any examples of expanding local food growing on the sites of hospitals, schools, businesses or derelict land?

Sky Farm: London’s largest food producing rooftop garden is bearing fruit. A Dalston cafe’s bid to transform its unused rooftop into a food producing haven is bearing fruit in the community as the business continues to take major steps in tackling climate challenges within the hospitality industry. View: <https://www.brunswickeast.london/sky-farm>

Hackney School of Food: A teaching kitchen like no other, set amidst gardens producing seasonal veg & herbs, a wood oven and fire pit which extend out to wildflower meadows, beehives, an orchard and some very friendly chickens! Offering a truly immersive and unforgettable ‘soil to spoon’

experience for school children across the borough of Hackney, Hackney School of Food (HSoF) is the brainchild of LEAP Federation and Chefs in Schools. Together, they work to bring the cooking and growing elements of the National Curriculum to life for thousands of pupils every year. Not to mention a haven for nature and wildlife. View: <https://www.capitalgrowth.org/hackney-school-of-food/>

Barge East Riverside Garden: Cedar wood constructed kitchen garden for the award winning Barge East restaurant in Hackney Wick. The garden is a modern take of a traditional potager and features chestnut seating, apple trained arches and a pergola growing hops. Guests sit within the planting and are treated to a sensory experience as they dine on garden produce grown by Urban Organic growers. View: <https://www.urban-organic.co.uk/barge-east-riverside-garden>

In line with the Parks Green Strategy policy, which aims to implement three food growing projects on Hackney estates annually, the "**Grown in Hoxton**" initiative received a £43,000 grant in 2022/2023. This funding was used to improve an existing community garden on Chart Street, incorporating a Sustainable Urban Drainage System and other infrastructure improvements to facilitate food growing. During the same period, a collaborative effort with "Groundwork London" resulted in the construction of a garden at Frampton Park Estate, featuring 12 raised beds, compost bays, and a shed.

Hackney Council's Resident Participation Team is on track to launch three food growing projects this financial year at Kyverdale, Wick, and Kingsgate Estates. Meetings have been held with residents across seven estates to support the development of their gardening groups through provision of training, alongside the voluntary and community sector. Currently, efforts are underway to cultivate resident groups on three additional estates for the upcoming year, with physical construction already in progress at Fawcette and Whiston Road Estates.

Wenlock Barn Estate is a good case study for creating growing spaces on unused land. Like many estates in Hackney, the Wenlock Barn Estate has many underused grass areas. The Growing Kitchen community garden, initiated by residents, has transformed one of these spaces into an area for organic food growing, while also providing a haven for local wildlife.

Homerton Hospital has created therapeutic outdoor food growing spaces for patients such as the Diabetes Garden which has been developed on unused hospital land. It now boasts a variety of root vegetables, strawberries and herbs. They have also created a therapeutic horticultural garden in which training sessions are run for patients to learn new gardening skills whilst connecting with nature. Such initiatives have been very beneficial for wellbeing, evident from the many positive testimonials gathered from patients.

Many organisations work with schools to transform unused playground areas into permanent outdoor learning spaces, including mini orchards, growing spaces, sensory gardens and wildflower borders that support local wildlife. One notable initiative was led by "Hackney Outdoors", who collaborated with students from William Patten School in Stoke Newington to develop an outdoor learning space that promotes youth empowerment alongside environmental and social benefits.

[See page 4](#)

MADLEAP is a local business that uses micro-scale anaerobic digestion technology with composting and food growing infrastructure to turn food waste into bioenergy, bio-fertiliser and compost to grow food for local consumption. As well as providing materials to aid local arable farming, they also conduct training sessions on urban food production.

Are there any local food growing organisations we should speak to about barriers to food growing and successful projects?

Growing Communities Hackney advocates for more opportunities for fringe farming in the borough. They have helped establish some urban farms and farmers markets to promote this initiative. They also host their own allotments in four parks across Hackney and host workshops for residents.

Sustainable Hackney has a food growing map which lists all the active growing spaces in Hackney and wider London: <https://sustainablehackney.org.uk/map/food>

Made in Hackney runs community cooking classes and workshops to provide residents with skills to eat healthier, plant-based meals.

Hackney City Farm has a small fringe farming growing space.

Groundwork East is an organisation based in Hackney and partnering with Hackney Council to develop the allotment in Frampton Park Estate.

Hackney School of Food

Hackney Allotment Society

Hackney Outdoors works with schools to transform unused land into growing spaces to promote environmental education.

Cordwainers Grow

AMURT's London Feeding Programme prepares and serves warm, nutritious vegetarian meals in Hackney. Most of the raw ingredients come from City Harvest or the Felix Project who donate food to us that would otherwise go to waste. They also run a project on a Hackney Housing Estate that teaches residents how to cook vegetarian meals at a low cost but also the nutritional benefits. The food prepared is shared as a community meal for all.

In January 2023 Hackney passed a motion to make it a Right to Food borough. Here's the text of the motion:

- The last decade has seen a staggering rise in food poverty across the UK, with millions of people going hungry in the UK and foodbank use spiking since the start of the pandemic.
- In April 2020 alone, Hackney's foodbank fed 1,803 people (an 186% increase on the previous year) with over 400 of them being children.
- During the height of the pandemic and first lockdown, the Council was delivering 1,500 food parcels per week, on average.
- During school holidays and half terms, Hackney Council supports families of more than 20,000 children on low incomes with help to buy food and pay bills.
- Some data suggests that as many as 56,000 adults are missing meals and 22,000 using a food bank in Hackney as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- Department of Work and Pensions statistics show that the number of people in Hackney dependent on Universal Credit has risen from 13,000 in 2020 to 32,000 in 2022.
- Poverty in our borough and across London has been exacerbated by the pandemic and this Conservative Government's failure to tackle the current cost of living crisis and target support to those who most need it.
- The 'Right to Food' campaign argues that the millions pushed into food poverty should be central to this strategy.
- The establishment of a council-wide Free School Meals task force, aimed at providing a hot meal to as many children in poverty as possible.

Council believes that:

- These figures are devastating for a rich country like the UK and reflect the fact that twelve years of Tory austerity have left too many people below the breadline.
- Enshrining the Right to Food in law would clarify government obligations on food poverty and would introduce legal avenues to hold public bodies accountable for failing to prevent people from going hungry in the fifth largest economy in the world.

Council resolves to:

- Declare Hackney a Right to Food borough and campaign for the Right to Food to be adopted at a national level.
- Ask the Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs urging the Government to:
 - Bring forward legislation to enshrine the Right to Food in law, clarifying the government's obligation to protect people from food poverty and introducing legal avenues to hold government bodies accountable for violations.
 - Create a national network of community kitchens including community use of school kitchens.
 - Implement a policy of Universal Free School Meals.
 - Promote access to public land suitable for community food growing.
 - Strengthen Hackney's Food Poverty and Insecurity Action Plan to address the worsening impact of the cost of living crisis to support the borough's poorest and most vulnerable families.

Growing communities. <https://growingcommunities.org>

Interviews

We interviewed the London-based organisation, Incredible Edible, on 4th September 2024, to learn about their experiences of local food production, good practices, and the barriers they face. Incredible Edible aims to nurture a localised food network providing an abundance of affordable, nutritious fruit and veg, with a food growing space within 100m of each Lambeth home.

Incredible Edible, Lambeth

1. What are the main barriers to local food growing in London?

In order to more effectively advocate for food growing, Incredible Edible Lambeth has been involved in two projects that have identified barriers to food growing in London:

- A Framework for Food Growing with Arup (2022-23): see slides summarising barriers and solutions [here](#).
- Open University project in 2023-4: see our final report summarising barriers and solutions [here](#).

The barriers to local food growing:

- Difficulties in securing land (knowing where land is available for food growing, securing permission and leases etc). It is particularly difficult to secure long leases as councils can see the land as a potential opportunity for them to generate income.

- Lack of policies supporting food growing, which in turn leads to a lack of institutional support and funding for food growing.
- Lack of joined up working at a local and national level on food growing across the local authority and community including:
 - Lack of a main point of contact for food growing.
 - Inconsistent approach by different departments e.g. legal and property departments can penalise small groups with attempts to secure commercial rents (particularly when a project has succeeded in improving the land) attempting to pass on legal liability for managing the space.
- Insecure and inadequate funding for food growing.

a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity?

People who face inequalities based on age, income, and ethnicity will face greater barriers to food growing. They may find it more difficult to access funding and they may need capacity building to help manage their groups. Many people that grow food are older, from minority communities and many have mental and/or physical disabilities - the latter particularly meaning they need additional support in food growing, both physically and with social/organisational issues.

IEL has supported a bid to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund for support to develop a network of support for Black and People of Colour in 2024 - 2027. This includes creating spaces for people to share their experiences, learn from one another and to amplify the impact and experience of BIPOC growers.

b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?

It's easy sometimes to adopt a piece of land and just begin growing on it; the problem is that it's insecure and difficult to gain formal permission. There is no formal agreement for food growing in Lambeth.

c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?

- Horticultural skills are important but the most important skills are social and organisational.
- Many people are running food growing projects in challenging circumstances e.g. on housing estates where there can be high levels of conflict.
- Many people have not run an organisation before and do not have the social skills or experience to do this.
- IEL provides training in everything from composting to food growing, non-violent communication and communications.

2. Are the benefits of local food growing sufficiently recognised and valued by current policies? In particular:

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

- Southwark employs two community food growing officers.
- [New York Green Thumb programme](#): full financial and governance support for 550 food growing spaces.
- [Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan: Growing From The Root](#): a fantastic, detailed plan to right wrongs over land and achieve land justice for BIPOC growers.

b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

Make it obligatory to include food growing spaces in all housing developments.

c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

- GLA to create an Urban Agriculture Plan for London
- GLA to create onus on local authorities to create Urban Agriculture Plans
- Support [Right to Grow](#) - the movement needs resources and infrastructure to fully understand what Right to Grow would look like in London, and to engage food growers in making this a reality
- Funding. There is so little funding available for food growing. IEL is continually under threat and cannot fulfil the potential of food growing because of insecure funding. Groups tell us that they need resources, connection to one another and upskilling and there is virtually no funding for any of these.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can be achieved by increasing food growing?

As created by Incredible Edible CIC as part of the Right to Grow campaign:

- [Full Report](#)
- [Summary](#)

Other evidence of the benefits of food growing:

- [Evidence from Sustain](#): Many of our food growing reports include a justification section. More links to evidence [here](#).
- There is also [this](#) which was developed by CAWR and some of our CSAs have used.
- [Influencing healthier and more sustainable dietary behaviours through planting and harvesting food-producing trees and hedges in the UK](#).
- [Here](#) is a study from Birmingham as well which provides an extensive review of the allotments activity in the city, providing information on the benefits of food growing and further recommendations for action.
- The Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation carried out a [piece of research](#) that might be of interest. It focussed on the benefits of allotments across food, health, and environment and although the primary purpose was to demonstrate that rather than being a drain on council budgets, allotments actually bring savings when you factor in costs across council services such as health, climate and nature emergencies etc.

My colleague Nicola Harris from Plant Based Treaty, consulted with the Vegan Organic Network, an educational charity founded in 1996 solely dedicated to veganic farming and growing. They created the first Stockfree Veganic Farming Standards in 2007. They recommended looking at the recommendations from Sustain, an alliance for better food and farming and guidance from the UK and Welsh Governments.

Sustain recommend councils:

- 1. Take a cross cutting approach:** Include food growing in public health strategies, food strategies, local plans, and climate and nature strategies. This is especially important for councils as community food growing meets many council objectives and crosses the work of many departments.
- 2. Build capacity:** Appoint a designated officer to champion food growing and create clearer pathways for accessing land, as well as links with local networks or key VCS organisations.
- 3. Increase access to land and assets:** Proactively identify land for food growing, make access to land easier including mapping land and assets to increase local food production e.g. glasshouses.
- 4. Plan for it:** Support for community food growing should be included in planning policies and frameworks (as it is in the overarching London Plan) and councils can secure and protect land for food growing.
- 5. Connect with others:** Sustain's Capital Growth and Good to Grow networks can help councils to encourage and support food growing and signpost you to other relevant organisations.

Their report highlights case studies with different councils:
<https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/Sustain-Briefing-Councils-and-Food-Growing.pdf>

From page 17 of the [Guidance for Growers and Growing Groups](#) issued by the Welsh Government, they issue advice on establishing a new growing sites, how to find land and negotiate with landowners:

Private landowners

In urban areas there may be some brownfield, underused, waste ground or derelict sites. The landowner may welcome income and participation on their land from the community if they don't have any immediate plans for the site or while the site is awaiting redevelopment. Areas of land awaiting development are especially apt for 'meanwhile use' i.e. the temporary letting of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such a time that they can be brought back into commercial use again. In rural areas, there may be farmers who have land available for community use, especially if they can generate an income from renting land to a group.

Large organisations

These include corporations (e.g. Network Rail), large local businesses or Institutions (National Health Service, Ministry of Defence, Universities). If you see neglected or derelict land belonging to a large organisation, contact them directly. They may be willing to allow community access as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Social housing

You may want to cultivate a piece of land on a social housing estate. Some housing providers have significant amounts of land which do not have houses on them and which the housing provider may be keen to relinquish maintenance responsibilities.

School grounds

An increasing number of schools and colleges are turning over part of their grounds for farming and growing and often this is done successfully in partnership with community organisations.

The UK Government's [Space for Growing Guide](#) also recommends sourcing land which could be easily converted into allotment plots or community gardens, such as derelict public or private sector land; green space surrounding social housing estates; or land owned by a school, a residential care home or hospital. They highlight a scheme called Grow it, Cook it, Eat it, in Salford where they used the space in alleyways behind and between people's properties to grow food.

Summary

In conclusion, local food growing schemes offer significant benefits, not only for individuals, but also communities, and the environment. These initiatives promote healthier lifestyles by increasing physical activity, improving mental well-being, and providing access to fresh, locally grown produce. Beyond personal health benefits, food growing schemes can transform urban spaces into productive and green areas that contribute to biodiversity, mitigate climate change, and offset carbon emissions.

Programs like the Lambeth Urban Forest Strategy, The Story Garden at the British Library, and the 'Golden Baggers' community garden in the Golden Lane Estate demonstrate how public and private lands can be repurposed for food growing, while support from public health and climate change teams adds further momentum. Other good practices in place include hiring a growing officer, incorporation of food growing in public spaces like hospitals, schools, and derelict lands, school-based kitchen gardens and school gardening programmes, and councils encouraging local food growing.

The main barriers to overcome include long waiting lists, limited resources and land availability, competing land-use priorities, and lack of funding. Additionally, logistical concerns such as water provision, soil contamination, and accessibility pose significant barriers. Equitable access to growing spaces is another concern, particularly for marginalised groups such as people with disabilities or those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

In an interview, Incredible Edible Lambeth, who aim to provide an abundance of affordable, nutritious fruit and veg, shared their insights into the main barriers they face in their work, the accessibility of food-growing land, and the skills required in order to expand local food growing.

With the increasing involvement of volunteer organisations, schools, and local councils, the integration of food growing into urban spaces is progressing. Continued investment, policy support, and community engagement will be key to expanding these projects and ensuring their success in the long term. This approach offers a sustainable pathway towards healthier communities and a greener, more resilient urban environment.

Southwark Council Ref No. LFG007

2a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

This is the response from the Community Gardening Coordinator, Parks and Natural Environment, Southwark Council, detailing their support for local food growing and community gardening.

Background

The Southwark Council Community Gardening service was created in June 2020 with the establishment of 2 fixed-term part-time Community Gardening Coordinator (CGC) posts with the mission to:

- Be the main point of contact within the council for community gardening and food growing enquiries
- Increase opportunities for residents to access community gardening
- Support a Southwark community gardening network
- Champion community gardening across the council

Following the creation of this service, in April 2021, the council launched the Allotment Expansion Guarantee (AEG) under the aegis of the Great Estates initiative. From 1 April 2023, the service was incorporated into the council structure and the Community Gardening Coordinator posts made permanent. From 1 September 2023 the service was transferred from Communities to Parks and Natural Environment following a restructure.

Allotment Expansion Guarantee

CDP 'right to have a community garden on an estate'

The Allotment Expansion Guarantee offers the opportunity for all residents on LBS Housing to develop a community gardening or food growing project where they live with the support of the Community Gardening service. There is a defined process with agreements, site checks and requirements from a group of residents and an offer of support from the council. This process and agreement and maintenance templates are also shared with other Southwark residents who want to set up a community garden on other land such as Housing Associations together with advice and support from the Community Gardening service.

The service has created an AEG Commonplace link that gives information about the process for residents to create new community allotments and maps proposals. The team commissioned a Southwark portal on the national Good to Grow map identifying community gardens across the borough with links to the AEG page. This allows community gardens to advertise plots available and call out for volunteers or advertising events, as well as being a search engine for those looking for nearby growing spaces and community gardens.

So far there have been 19 new resident led food growing gardens on housing estates, 239 new growing plots, 5 more projects in development currently.

Food growing on non-housing land in Southwark

The team supports food growing and community gardening on other land than housing such as Parks, church, housing association, schools in the following ways:

- Advise and signpost projects in schools, other types of land (housing associations, church, meanwhile sites etc)
- Identifying opportunities to improve access to existing community growing areas in parks (mapping, linking groups to sites, supporting/advising Parks staff with suitable management agreements and formal leases)
- Identifying and gaining funding for new community growing projects in parks
- Supporting organisations to develop community projects in parks
- Developing a food growing project in several homeless hostels/ collaboration with Public Health

Community Gardening Network

- A core task of the Community Gardening service is to develop the borough-wide Community Gardening network supporting existing local networks and growers
- The network comprises of all those involved in AEG projects, other existing community gardens, community gardening in parks, schools, housing associations and other communal spaces and larger organisations offering community gardening (including formal allotment holders)
- The network promotes peer-to-peer support to enable residents to share experience and good practice, promote mutual support and advocate for more greening and gardening opportunities in the borough.
- It also connects gardeners with council and external initiatives related to climate change, mental and physical wellbeing.

In July 2023 the service held the first of a series of listening events with community growers across the borough to hear directly about the challenges facing community gardening, discuss opportunities for future. One of the outcomes was the ask for council support for a community gardening working group to focus on relevant topics.

In October 2023 the team organised the first borough wide Community Gardening Working Party at the Paper Garden in Surrey Quays. The working group focus was on solutions to dealing with green waste and increasing composting and made several interesting recommendations.

In August 2024 the summer Southwark community gardening networking event was at Surrey Docks City Farm. This event included a practical workshop “How to work collaboratively in your community gardening project – practical tips and dealing with common issues.”

The next event will be in November 2024 at the Paper Garden.

Training

Food growing training The Community Gardening team fund training from local Community Gardeners to teach 2 hour sessions at new estate community gardens. These are generally monthly sessions over 8 months of the year and cover all aspects of organic growing, from planning your plot, sowing seeds, timings and spacing, plant care, dealing with pests and disease, plant feeding, to harvesting and composting. This is done in an informal way led by what the group want to focus on.

Community Organising Training The Community Gardening team commissioned High Trees to deliver in person one day courses – Introduction to Community Organising.

Communications Training The Community Gardening team commissioned bespoke communications training for community gardening groups following the Non-Violent Communications method. Three workshops have occurred with more planned for this winter.

Compost Doctor The Community Gardening team commissioned a local composting expert to deliver bespoke green waste composting training sessions for community gardens and allotments at their sites. This also includes training sessions at larger composting demonstration sites.

Monitoring and evaluation

The team conduct an annual evaluation of growers in the borough to inform the service of issues, opportunities and demographics of those taking part. In 2023 78 community gardeners took part.

Partnership working

Another important role of the service is to champion the benefits of community gardening across the council, as well as representing the council in relevant external forums. The Community Gardening Coordinators contribute and review project plans/strategies and provide advice to colleagues on a wide variety of policy areas, including:

- Sustainable Food Strategy
- Climate Change
- Land use
- Resident Participation
- Planning and New Homes
- Mental and physical wellbeing
- Public health research

The Coordinators also attend meetings and engage with external groups and organisations, including the bi-monthly intra-council network meetings facilitated by Sustain, the pan-London Capital Growth Working Party meetings, Natural England London Happier Outdoors

Network, the Food Insecurity Network and the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership meetings.

Tower Hamlets Collaborative Ref No. LFG008

Response developed in collaboration with: Women's Environmental Network, CFGN, Limbrough Growing Hub, Stepney City Farm, Providence Row, Mad Leap, Boil & Bubble Bowden, Seeds for Growth charity.

Context to this submission: This submission is based on a range of insights and recommendations submitted from community representatives involved in food growing in Tower Hamlets. It also draws directly on recommendations from "[Seeds for a Revolution](#)" and "[Recipes for Revolution](#)". These reports were written by the [Blueprint Architect group](#), an evolving group of 20-30 people representing community leaders, organisations, activists and residents engaged in the food system of Tower Hamlets. Blueprint Architects developed the recommendations based on their collective experiential knowledge, and learning from the [Just FACT programme](#). The Just FACT programme consists of a partnership of 26 community gardens, collectives, food co-ops and social enterprises coming together to create the building blocks for an alternative food system that is democratic, environmentally sustainable, and people-driven.

1. Main Barriers to Local Food Growing in London

a. How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?

Barriers for young people

- **Lack of opportunity to build relationships with people who could teach them to grow:** Boil and Bubble Bowden reflect that the SEN children they work with can be isolated from the relationships they need to learn growing skills.

"Kids will learn from being around other people. That's a barrier for B&B kids, just being in a relationship, trusting, listening, spending time with the other person. Having not had access to these things is huge."

- Boil and Bubble Bowden

- **Limitations of schools to support skill development:** Food growing skills are not required to be taught as part of the curriculum, so the offer schools have around food growing will vary in scope and quality. As a result, schools often need to spend time applying to grant makers, or partnering with community organisations to apply for funding for growing projects, which can lead to a variable, limited or short term offer to students.

Barriers for older people

- **Toilets:** Research from Toynbee Hall has shown that older people in Tower Hamlets plan their day to day activities according to whether they can access a toilet. For

some older people, whether a growing site has access to a toilet may decide whether or not they participate in the project. Community gardens in Tower Hamlets have raised funds to build compost toilets on site such as Mile End Community Garden (MECG) and R-Urban, while other community gardens like Cranbrook Community Garden are in the process of looking for funds to meet this need. MECG and Bethnal Green Nature Reserve have worked with Compost Mentis to co-design the toilet with residents, ensuring the design meets the needs of different groups within the local community.

- **Accessibility of sites:** See barriers for disabled people.
- **Digital exclusion:** Stepney City Farm have pointed out that digital exclusion can stop Londoners with limited skills or devices from finding their local growing sites. Research from London AgeUK (2021) shows that Londoners over 75 still face significant struggles with using the internet. Just FACT projects have succeeded in including older Londoners by getting out into the community and inviting them to join through door knocking, local people inviting older friends from the community, or targeting invitations to older people's services like Linkage Plus.

Barriers to growing for people on low incomes

- **Access to land:** See below
- **Sufficient time and funding for community engagement:** Over the course of the Just FACT programme, there are key learnings about how growing projects involve local working class communities. R-Urban Poplar is now a thriving closed loop system growing site, but workers spent hundreds of hours door knocking and repeated engagement with residents over time to build trust and a relationship with the site and team based there. Seeds for Growth charity faced difficulties in getting residents involved in food growing on the Isle of Dogs until they linked with local partners:

“Although the project found it challenging to encourage individuals to join sessions at the growing area selected, there was more success when sessions were delivered in familiar surroundings... The collaboration with the local clinic, church, and social health practitioners has motivated these organisations to enhance their existing spaces for gardening and cultivation programs benefiting their users or patients.”

- Seeds for Growth charity

‘There is a lot of extra work and time that has to go into good community work, and you have to be really flexible in a space that is open to the public. You have to be able to pivot and unknown things come up, but this isn't always accounted for or covered by funders. A lot of time working on an estate is spent relationship building, and chatting about what's going on in people's lives. It doesn't always have a direct 'outcome' but it's still important and part of community building. Perhaps it doesn't feel valued in the same way as other types of work. The value and impact of it is difficult to measure and quantify. These parts of a project need to be acknowledged and valued more, not as an extra but more central part.’

- Limborough Hub As communities have become involved in growing projects, they have been

supported to run their own activities, take part in decision-making or become paid members of staff. However, there also needs to be more support for working class residents who want to start their own growing initiatives to receive funding, training and support. Youth Collective, Somos Semillas, for example, have received funding from Just FACT to resource a facilitator within the group to support their work to develop and include more young people in indigenous growing practices. As a non-charitable entity, it can be harder for them to access funding (see barriers for people experiencing racism below).

Barriers to growing for groups who experience racism

- **Extensive research has already been done by BIPOC organisations and researchers examining these issues in depth:** We encourage the committee to refer to two Rootz into Food Growing (Calliste, Sivapragasam, McDonald, Land In Our Names, 2021) and Jumping Fences (Terry, 2023)
- **Lack of sustainable funding for BIPOC-led food initiatives:** For misery, a mental health community creating QTIBPOC-specific spaces for nature-based healing activities, funding is ‘one of the biggest obstacles’ for the continuation of their work. *“A more robust approach would need to be well resourced, consistently - Most likely it needs to be from governmental level”*. As misery is not a legally constituted entity, a larger charitable organisation agreed to act as a host to hold funds from the Just FACT programme. However, many funders do not offer this flexibility, making it more difficult for collectives outside of charitable structures to be funded.
- **Inaccessible information about projects:** According to Stepney City Farm, it is important for local residents to access information in languages that reflect local demographics. Older people from ethnic minorities are also more likely to be digitally excluded than white older people (Poole, Lydia et al., 2021). There needs to be support for growing projects to find non-digital ways for people to find out about local growing sites and sign up for them.

Barriers to growing for disabled people

- **Toilet provision:** A lack of toilets on growing sites can also impact the inclusion of disabled people in growing projects. See Bichard & Knight, 2012 for how disabled people are impacted by the increasing scarcity of public toilets. At Limborough, a ‘grow, cook and eat’ food and action hub, the team have flagged that the inside toilets of this adapted council flat are not suitable for people with extra mobility needs. They are also only available during working hours though the site itself is open at any time for key holders.
- **Accessibility of sites:** Growing sites often are not fully accessible to disabled people. Limborough Hub is a community growing site very close to lots of schools including SEN providers, but unfortunately as the garden is not fully accessible there have been barriers to engaging with them. Often the people managing growing sites are aware of the problems such as unsuitable pathways, but lack the funds to be able to rectify the issue.

Barriers to growing for homeless people

- **Insecure housing and lack of access to resources:** According to Providence Row,

there are specific challenges to accessing growing spaces for homeless people, who have no fixed abode and are therefore often transient. If they do get given accommodation it often comes without access to a green space. Little to no access to growing spaces means they also don't have access to gardening tools and resources such as seeds/compost that accompanies these projects.

- **Lack of gardening opportunities:** Providence Row's 10-week Gardening Trainee scheme provides a horticulture accreditation; it's proven to have a great impact on participant's mental wellbeing, confidence and motivation, but there aren't necessarily opportunities available to continue exercising their skills once the programme is over.
- **Wellbeing factors:** Substance misuse and mental health may contribute to lack of engagement in gardening. If someone has been rough sleeping, their energy and ability to be focus/be punctual can be difficult.

"As our clients don't have homes, land or resources of their own to buy tools, compost and seeds etc., they are much less likely to be able to grow food and enjoy the benefits that come with gardening/growing and having a tranquil outdoor space to use by themselves or with a local community that they may eventually be a part of."

- Providence Row

b. How easy and affordable is it to access land for food growing?

Redistributing land ownership is essential to democratise access to food. Yet accessing land for food growing in London presents significant challenges:

- **There are not enough sites to meet demand for growing spaces:** Stepney City Farm has shared that they cannot meet the local demand for growing spaces. There is a big Bangladeshi community in Stepney that come from a growing background who are keen to have allotments. They have the growing skills but not the land.

"Access to growing space is limited or non-existent, including outside of the school, at home, for the kids to continue learning and growing"

- Boil and Bubble Bowden

"Those with no access to gardens have less opportunities unless they are lucky enough to have an allotment or access to green space (unlikely)... [Accessing land for food growing is] not affordable unless there is access to allotments."

- MadLEAP

- **Regeneration and access to space:** Many growing sites in Tower Hamlets are dependent on permission from housing associations and the local council. This is a fantastic opportunity but can be precarious, especially where sites are in 'meanwhile' spaces during regeneration efforts.

"If housing associations and Councils are able to offer spaces like this for free, that is amazing – it has been key for a model like Limbrough, and is what makes the project possible."

- Limbrough Hub

‘In order to continue what we do at R-Urban we need to secure future space from the developer and Poplar HARCA’

-R Urban Poplar

Seeds for Growth charity have observed increased awareness by landowners of the health and well-being benefits for their tenants and residents of gardening outdoors, and that the new plants and trees mitigate the negative impact of climate change. In their experience funding more readily obtained from the registered social landlords, than from local authorities.

- **Access to land and issues of ownership and management by residents:** A number of Just FACT projects have found challenges related to issues of community ownership of growing sites. Limbrough Hub in Poplar has tried various approaches to organising ownership over beds. They trialled a year of shared beds and experienced a huge drop off in interest, and found that in general people want to take responsibility for their own patch. Eastend Homes offers residents access to growing spaces, and though the intention is always to create community gardens, their experience has been that residents prefer to have their own plots. There is always an issue of there not being enough beds for every resident who wants them, leading to people feeling allocation is unfair. In answer to this Eastend Homes tends to build more beds rather than over-manage existing beds. They also advocate for the council to conduct a space audit, creating opportunities for residents to be able to challenge or suggest growing spaces either to landlords or the council itself.
- **The financialisation of land and the concept of ‘land ownership’ in London:** Redistributing land ownership is key to democratise access to food. Society is becoming more widely aware that access to land is one of the biggest barriers to accessible, healthy, nutritious food, whether this be a raised bed in communal flats, a community garden or a small farm holding. The concept of land ownership is both theoretically and practically a hindrance to food justice as it relies upon restricted access to resources that could and should be used as spaces for collective use, including food growing (Platform London, 2023).

“We talk about using the framework of reparations to rebuild our relationship with the earth, and central to this framework is healing. As a community we need to rebuild a relationship with the land that we live with now in Britain but that’s hard because we are told so often this isn’t our land. As soon as we make a mistake we are told to go back to where you came from because this isn’t our home, but that isn’t viable for me. I was born here and the land of my ancestral heritage in Bangladesh is drowning because of capitalism and colonialism. I need to build a relationship with the land that is here, and to connect the struggle here with struggles happening across borders.”

- [personal information redacted for publication], Blueprint Architect

c. What training and skills are required for local food growing to expand?

Recognise, resource and connect local sources of knowledge of food and food growing:

There is a wealth of knowledge that exists within communities, but there is no infrastructure in place to properly compensate and connect community members who hold such knowledge. The Blueprint Architects ask that local councils recognise the value of local knowledge of the land, of food growing, and of community needs by properly resourcing people with the relevant expertise to advise and provide support to new and ongoing projects.

Support local food growing networks: The Architects also ask for local authorities to support the development of an accessible network of local food growers and of other local individuals and organisations working within the food system, so that people in need are aware of where to look for support. One example of this being done is through the Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network, currently run by WEN. The network runs seasonal gatherings and provides direct practical support and training to local groups wanting to set up gardens. Another example is how the team running R-Urban Poplar community garden has collaborated with local community members on workshops, where they have shared food growing and cooking knowledge with others within the community. Another great example is misery - a mental health collective for queer, trans and non-binary people of colour to come together and exchange knowledge about the land and growing. Community Food Growers Network (CFGN) provides this support for food projects at London-wide level. Existing growers networks are part of the infrastructure needed for connecting and supporting growers, but they can be difficult to resource. Ideally councils would fund support networks and organisers in localities who are doing this work.

Training to support conflict resolution: Residents using shared growing sites can experience multiple types of conflict that can make or break participation, such as treatment of the space, use of materials, or theft.

“There can be a lot of conflict in shared spaces. Support or training on how to residents and organisers can communicate well would help, as well as having suitable forums to communicate grievances as well.

- Limborough

Other training needs raised by contributors to this evidence raised the need for organisational and administrative skills for residents to more independently run garden and support with approaches to collective decision making. Succession planning support is another need for many growing spaces that rely on one of two residents to run successfully.

2. Recognition and Valuation of Local Food Growing in Current Policies

a. Are there any examples of good practice from local authorities supporting local food growing?

Southwark Council: There are a number of promising initiatives being taken by Southwark Council,

including a community food growing officer to liaise with community groups and clear ways that residents can search for [local food growing sites](#). The [Southwark Land Commission](#) report also seeks to find ways ways “spaces in Southwark have the potential to work harder for people in the borough”

Hull council has passed a motion granting ‘[right to grow](#)’ which shifts ‘which shifts access to public land from a permission-based approach, to a rights-based system with an emphasis on meaningful and trusting engagement between community and authority.’

b. What opportunities are there for the Mayor to support local food growing in the renewal of the London Plan?

MadLEAP shared the following advice on how the London Plan could make land and resources available:

“Supporting access to training, repurposing unused green space as well as brown spaces. Temporary use could be granted for land earmarked for development, support with mobile infrastructure would be helpful for those with limited resources”

- MadLEAP

c. Is there anything else that can be done to support local food growing in London?

Support for community facilities including compost toilets: Tower Hamlets council have been quite supportive of compost toilets being developed in Tower Hamlets, which is to be celebrated. We recommend other councils follow their example, and not require community groups to apply for planning permission for community facilities in community spaces.

Improvements are needed for how Londoners find out about their local growing sites: According to Stepney City Farm, people who are digitally excluded or have limited English need information in languages that reflect local demographics, and non-digital ways for people to find out about local growing sites and sign up for them.

Creating a supportive economic environment for local growers and producers to cross-subsidise community growing: MadLEAP advocates for a push towards more local procurement and coordination on the sales and marketing front to ensure local produce (where grown as part of a community enterprise model) is sold locally to minimise food miles.

Better use of underused land: Support for initiatives that seek to increase access to spare or underused land would be helpful. Seeds for Growth take an approach to identifying social housing estates and with the support and funding from the landowner, then enthuses, trains, and supports the tenants and residents to create their own new community gardens, for example. The Environment Committee could also engage with ‘[Land Match](#)’, a consortium who are developing a new land matching service for England, that will open up more space for community-led, diverse and sustainable farming landscapes.

d. Are there any co-benefits in meeting other environmental or strategic targets that can

be achieved by increasing food growing?

Health and Wellbeing: There has been feedback across Just FACT projects about the positive impact of activities on people's health and wellbeing:

'We have really enjoyed coming to these workshops and gardening is good for my mental health because it gets me out of the house'.

- Limbrough workshop participant

Seeds for Growth charity have also conducted a literature review detailing the physical and mental health benefits of growing, which can be found in the reference section of this document.

Employment: Getting involved in local growing projects can increase residents' confidence to get into work, whether that's through practising English or taking up leadership roles.

Recognising that community hubs allow cross over of mutually reinforcing activities:

Where many activities are taking place on the same site, it can be easier to engage with residents to try something new.

'Having the coffee morning at the hub space where lots of families locally meet has meant more crossover between the different groups of people coming to the activities. For instance, the gardening participants come to the coffee morning and the Maydwell gardeners run the coffee morning at Limbrough Hub who also attend our workshops. The community using the space has grown significantly in the past year.'

- Limbrough Hub'

Biodiversity net gain policy This could be promoted to developers as a reason to support development of growing sites. However, it should be recognised land needs to be taken care of for those targets to be met and there should be more engagement with developers for them to understand what that means.

"More food growing for local consumption will help reduce food miles; ensure higher nutrient levels by removing the need for early harvesting, chilling and transport; provide green training and employment opportunities; increase local biodiversity; offer therapeutic activities; help people reconnect with nature and where food comes from; encouraging healthier eating, particularly when food growing is integrated with school curriculums and menus."

- MadLEAP

Conclusion

It is encouraging that the Environment Committee has instigated this call for evidence. It is also important to recognise that there is vital research and existing work out there in response to these questions. As well as the BIPOC-led research referenced in 'Barriers for groups who experience racism, Solidarity Across Land Trades (SALT) has a Workers' Enquiry coming out soon, about the state of workers' rights in the food growing sector. We urge the London Assembly to engage in an ongoing way with research produced by community food growers and organisers, and create capacity and connections through which to do this.

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Wilder Ref No. LFG009

As co-founder and director of [Wilder](#), an environmental social enterprise based in Southwark, I'm dedicated to creating spaces that benefit both wildlife and people. Before this, I served as a Labour Councillor in South Bermondsey and chaired the Environment Scrutiny Committee, focusing on reducing air pollution across the borough.

I'm excited to share that I've launched my report on urban agriculture:

[Leanne_Werner_Final_Report.pdf \(churchillfellowship.org\)](#)

When I initially applied for the Churchill Fellowship, my goal was to explore how food growing in cities could boost biodiversity and integrate these insights into my work. However, my travels across North America revealed that urban agriculture can—and should—be a transformative force in reshaping our cities, our relationship with food, and with each other. This movement not only enhances local sustainability but also addresses key challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and community well-being.

I hope that City Hall will find my report and recommendations valuable—we have the potential to significantly advance food growing initiatives across our city. I've included several recommendations that could be implemented on a city-wide scale.