

COST Action TU1201 UAG in European Cities

Short Term Scientific Mission

# **The institutional organisation of UAG in the UK (the case of Birmingham)**

**A practical tool for the implementation of UAG Associations in Portugal**

**Report**

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## **Abstract**

The practice of urban gardening is well implemented in Birmingham, being possible to find successful cases to local realities which include urban allotment gardens, community gardens and other types of places for urban food growing. This study focuses on the institutional organisation of different types of urban gardens in Birmingham and seeks the understanding of their structure, role and the benefits of their existence, in order to provide a tool for the implementation of allotment associations. For research purposes the main types of urban gardens and types of institutions (national and local) were identified, allowing the selection of 4 cases studies - Martineau Gardens, Edible EastSide, Salop Drive Market Garden and Walsall Road Allotments. Data collection derived from on site go-along interviews with a member of staff and from a photographic survey. The results demonstrate that there are several institutional organisations whose main role is to rule, manage and support these gardens. They are organized hierarchically, from national organisations to local associations, and are extremely important for the implementation and success of these growing areas.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Context and aims

Urban allotment gardens (UAG) are well established in most European countries (Howe et al., 2005), although more in some countries than in others. In the Northern European and Scandinavian countries these spaces are an important component of the urban landscape (Costa, 2012) demonstrating to have several uses such as food production, recreation, therapy, etc (Jankovska and Panagopolus, 2010). In such countries, UAG are organized by community organisations or associations supported by national and local regulations who establish rules and ways for their operation and management (Costa, 2012; Crouch, Sempik and Wiltshire, 2005; Damin and Palmer, 2002). Importantly, they also consider social and cultural values of great significance as a result of their long tradition.

In Southern Europe, and for example in Portugal, the reality is a bit different. UAG in Portugal have first emerged in Lisbon, responding to social changes that were related to migrations and immigration movements towards the city during 1960's and 1970's (Matos and Batista, 2013). As a result, plots of vacant land, private and public, were occupied, creating improvised, clandestine and illegal allotments (Matos and Fundevila, 2011). In the past decade, the implementation of UAG in Portuguese cities has increased significantly. Municipalities and stakeholders are leading their creation and making efforts to legalize and provide better physical and social conditions to the existing ones. Yet, there are many cities without UAG, as connections and proximity to the rural world are still very strong.

In Portugal, UAG are often planned and managed by public or private entities at a local level. Some cities have created programmes to encourage their implementation and in some cases they are integrated in the green infrastructure, or allocated under the land use category of "production and recreation zones". Each entity wishing to design and implement an allotment creates its own regulation framework or relies on existing programs, such as the "Horta à Porta" programme by LIPOR, the waste management company of Greater Porto.

Portugal, like in many other Southern European countries, has not yet developed national legislation/policies or national or local associations to guide, implement and manage the operation of these areas. If public or private entities wish to implement UAG in their cities, they are responsible for establishing the operating rules (Rodrigues et al. 2014).

Therefore, this study intends to develop a detailed study of the associations of UAG in the UK, and particularly in the city of Birmingham (which has a large number of UAG and several other types such as community gardens), regarding their emergence, the reasons and motivations for their constitution, their organisational structure, goals and derived benefits.

Taking into account the contextual situation of UAG in Portugal, this study explores UAG associations or similar organisations of urban gardening in order to provide a guiding tool which could serve as a support for countries which want and need to learn from well established good examples in the UK.

## **1.2. Background Definitions**

### **Allotment Gardens (AG)**

Until the creation of the Allotments Act 1922 the expressions "allotment" and "allotment garden" were not defined in the UK. The term "allotment garden" was used for the first time in section 11 of the Agriculture Act of 1920, but a definition was not provided in that Act. It was first defined in section 22 of the Allotments Act 1922 as: "An allotment not exceeding forty poles in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetables or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family." (Mitchell, 1922).

In the UK, this description remains important because it defines the permitted use of an allotment plot. That is, the plot is used mainly for growing vegetables or fruits, but part of the plot can be allocated for growing flowers, as a leisure area or for keeping small livestock, and surplus produce can be shared with others (Wiltshire, 2009).

### **Community Gardens (CG)**

CG is different from allotment gardens in several points.

They are managed and used by local communities or neighbourhoods for recreation and education purposes, and are sometimes found on unused or abandoned urban sites, or in grounds of public buildings, e.g. public housing, hospitals, retirement homes. CG often have a small building for use by the community, in particular by children and disadvantaged groups (Viljoen, 2005).

CG support community building and people who want to grow something. Besides providing a place to grow plants, many also provide a wide variety of social, recreational, educational and environmental services, facilities and opportunities that are generated by and help meet local needs (FCFCG, 2015).

### **Brownfields**

Brownfields are plots of land which were previously occupied by industry, e.g. factory sites. These places are often contaminated by chemical waste products from their previous industrial use and generally considered to be a primary source of new land for development in existing, and especially post industrial cities. Some of such sites, especially those which are suitable for Continuous Productive

Urban Landscapes (CPULs), that is, if appropriate soil conditions exist, or if contaminated soil is treated or renewed in areas where edible crops will be grown, are currently being used as urban gardens (CG or UAG) (Viljoen, 2005). These spaces are often located near urban neighbourhoods and are also frequently used to alleviate the demand for allotments in certain areas. They can accommodate a variety of configurations, such as raised-bed pop-up gardens.

### **City Farms (CF)**

CF a community project that uses an area of wasteland in a city or periphery area to create in response to a lack of access to green space, combined with a desire to encourage strong community relationships and an awareness of gardening and farming. These sites are usually set up by local volunteers but in Some farms go on to employ paid workers, while smaller groups rely on dedicated volunteers (FCFCG, 2015)

### **Market Gardens (MG)**

MG is the term used to describe smaller growing operations to be shipped especially to local or nearby markets. The main purpose of the produce of MG is sale, differing from traditional allotment gardens as their produce is mainly destined to self-consumption by the occupiers. These gardens, or small farms, are similar in scale and intensity to a community garden (MCC, 2015).

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Introduction**

By studying a number of Urban Gardens in Birmingham, this study aims to offer specific support and a guiding tool able to serve as a foundation for countries who want to establish UAG associations or institutional organisations in order to improve the functioning of their spaces. This research is divided in four phases:

#### **1. General assessment**

This phase included a short literature review about the reality of urban gardens in Europe with regard to their organisation and maturity as well as the collection of information about the city of Birmingham - the different types of urban gardening and the different types of institutional organisation that support them. Additionally, key terms are defined.

#### **2. Case studies and their selection**

For research purposes, four case studies have been selected intending to represent the main different types of existing urban gardens in Birmingham - Martineau Garden, Salop Garden, Edible EastSide and Walsall Road Allotment; at this stage the contacts with the sites were also established. Contacts were also made with Birmingham City Council (BCC) and Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation (BDAC).

#### **3. Preparation of the go-along interviews and running the interviews**

The formulation of the interviews has taken into account the aims of the study and the different entities to be interviewed. These were carried out during a walk along the gardens selected for the study, with a member of staffs responsible for its management who had previously accepted to be interviewed. The interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder. The go-along interviews were accompanied by a photographic survey of the site. Additionally, the two mentioned institutions (BCC and BDAC) were interviewed by email.

#### **4. Analysis**

During the fourth and final phase, all data were processed, organized and analysed. The transcriptions of the interviews were coded and the themes established aimed at achieving the objectives of the study.

## 2.2. Interviews

### Method - Go-along interviews

Seidman (2013) states that "*at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience*". The author also claims that interview as a method is a powerful way to gain insights into educational and other important social issues through the understanding of the experience of inquiry and people's ability to make meaning through language (Seidman, 2013). Interviews are more personal, and allow asking follow-up questions in order to explore the answers of the respondents. There are several survey methods that utilize interviews, such as personal or face-to-face interview, the phone interview, and the online interview (Sincero, 2012) and go-along interviews.

The "go-along" is a technique of data collection in which the researcher moves alongside informants while interviewing them to collect information (Carpiano, 2009). It involves participating in movement while conducting research, and is based on the notion of "following the people". The "go-along" method is a hybrid between participant observation and qualitative interviewing. Similar to participant observation, it involves spending time "hanging out" with key informants. It is also a systematic, outcome-focused manner of collecting information, similar to qualitative interviews. In the "go-along" interview method the researcher walks with interviewees as they move through.

### Structure of the interviews

The interviews targeted a member of staff responsible for those sites (often a project coordinator or someone who is knowledgeable about the site and works or worked closely with him/her). These were held on site, allowing also for a photographic survey. Members of the BCC and the BDAC due to logistics were interviewed by email. These interviews were considered to be very important as they allowed having the point of view, and thus another perspective of the process, of the institutions which have the role to coordinate these spaces at a municipal level.

For the interviews two groups of questions were prepared targeting both the local associations (selected case studies of different types) and the institutions that coordinate local associations (municipal associations). Regardless of their intended audience, all the questions were organized into three parts (the actual questions can be found in Appendix):

**PART 1:** The starting process for creation of the project/association – aspects concerning of their emergence, the first steps to run the project/associations; the reasons and motivations to develop the association.

**PART 2:** Institutional organisation – aspects about their institutional organisation (responsible team, rules/regulations and aspects concerning the regulation - rents, management, maintenance, funding, work with outsiders and other relevant aspects).

**PART 3:** Benefits and future advices –aspects regarding the benefits of being an institution or of being organized and main factors to take into consideration when creating and running allotment or community gardens projects and associations.

The site interviews were conducted while visiting the gardeners to the following interviewees:

Jayne Bradley – Creator/promoter and director of Edible Eastside

Veronica Barry- ran the Sandwell Project during several years. She worked in Salop Drive Market Garden from 1999-2014

Caroline Hutton – Director of Martineau Gardens

Betty Farruggia - Committee Secretary of Walsall Road Allotment

Regarding the municipal institutions - BCC and BDAC – the interviewees were:

Nikki Bradley - Allotments Officer (Parks and Nature Conservation)

Clive Birch – Chair of the Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation

### **2.3. Research area (Birmingham)**

Birmingham is one of the top UK cities with high quality of its parks and urban green spaces - totalling 14% of the city area (URGE- Team, 2004). The amount of green spaces is reinforced by the great expression that allotment gardens have in the city. Birmingham has the largest provision of allotments of any Local Authority in the UK with 115 sites and nearly 7,000 plots. Allotment sites are located throughout the city and range in size and facilities, and over 80% are managed through allotment associations (BCC, 2015).

In addition to these classic allotments and their associations, there are also other ways of practicing "urban gardening" - community orchards, gardens, plus veg patches in schools and in hospital grounds – emphasizing the ways through which people can grow food and interact with nature as well as taking all the other benefits associated with the practice of this activity (Growing Birmingham, 2015). Community gardens, brownfields/pop-up gardens and market gardens, are examples of spaces where these practices can take place. As previously stated, the selected case studies (see Fig.1).were meant to provide a comprehensive sample of a diversity of types of gardens and associated different institutional organizations.

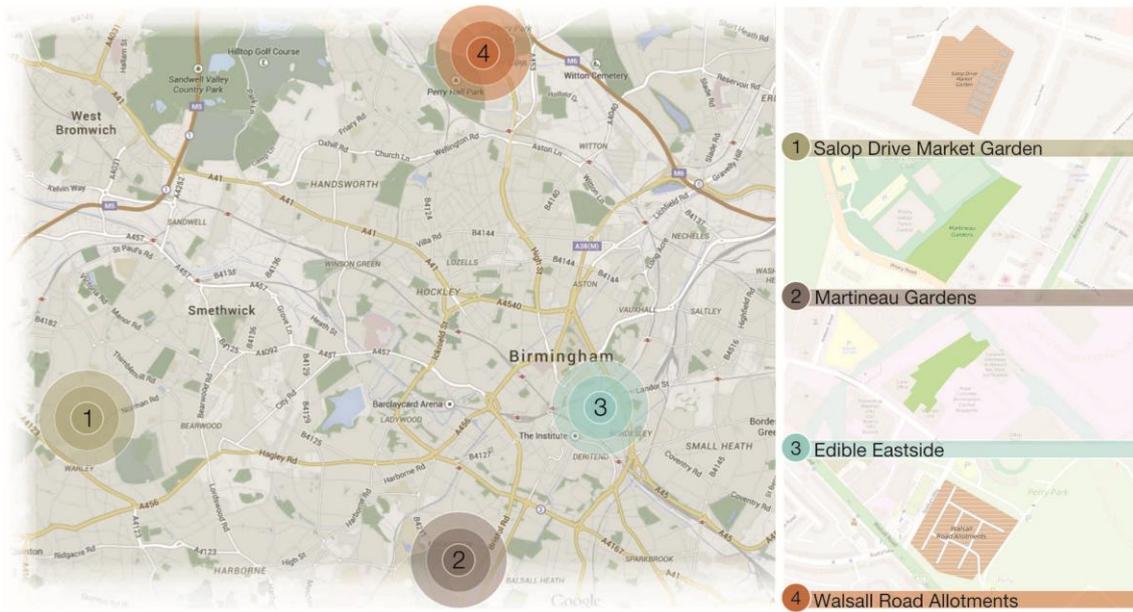


Figure 1 – Location of the case studies in Birmingham. Adapted from Google maps.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Case studies sites

##### Martineau Gardens



Figure 2 – Martineau Gardens’s location - Edgbaston, Birmingham. Source: Bing maps.

Martineau Gardens (MG) established in 1997 is a charity community garden, a social enterprise and a visitor attraction. The garden, with two and half acres of organically maintained land, is located in Edgbaston, less than 3 miles away from Birmingham city centre, and close to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and the University of Birmingham. The space is an oasis for wildlife and a haven of tranquillity (Martineau Gardens, 2015) (Fig. 2).

MG provides a calm environment for everyone, a place to learn, to heal, to contact with nature and play. This is a place where Birmingham inhabitants can engage in a more sustainable lifestyle and find out more about organically grown food. The Gardens provide a horticultural therapist who works with people with disabilities or mental health issues. As Caroline Hutton stated:

*“This is a place for a great diversity of people with different interests, and a place where people can experience different activities in different areas of garden.”*

The variety of areas that can be found in the gardens include: vegetable plots (grow vegetables), the orchard, the hot house (a habitat for succulents and sub-tropical species), formal gardens (plants from all over the world), wildlife area (designated a site of local importance for nature conservation), the pavilion visitor room (wildlife library, information), earth oven (baking bread and pizzas), wildflower meadow, shipwreck play area, bird hide, one heart circle (a sacred place for meeting on common ground), bee hives, herb garden, plant sales area, pottery studio and composting areas (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). The Gardens are looked after by a community of volunteers, the majority of whom experience social exclusion or isolation. The place is open six days a week and visits are free.

Over the time, the gardens have gone through several transformations including in the Environment Studies Centre for Junior School Students who was previously ran by the City Council. In

1997 the City Council ran out of money and closed this place and a group of people included the staff of Environment Studies Centre, volunteers and neighbourhood had the idea of creating a community garden oriented to therapeutic horticulture, as Caroline Hutton explained.

## CASE STUDIES

### BIRMINGHAM

# Martineau Gardens

**Location:** Edgbaston, Birmingham

**Type:** Community Garden

**Community-led:** Private

**N° of plots:** 8

**Dimensions of plots:**  
Variable



Figure 3 - Informative map of Martineau Gardens. Adapted from Bing maps and flyer of garden.



**Figure 4 - Martineau Gardens.** Pictures taken when visited the site. A: Shipwreck Play Area; B: Vegetable Plots ; C: Path to Wildlife Area; D: Path to Formal Garden; E: Wildflower Meadow; F:Vegetable Plots, Bee Hives and Composting Areas; G: Plant Sales Area. Pictures Maria Sousa, 2015.

## Salop Drive Market Garden



Figure 5 – Salop Drive Market Garden. Location. Source: Bing maps.

Salop Drive Market Garden, created in 1999, is a three acre site working as a market garden and a local food project which supplies bags of freshly grown vegetables to local families. This space located in Sandwell, about 7 km of Birmingham, was an abandoned allotment garden that was adapted to develop the infrastructure for this project (Fig. 5).

During the interview, Veronica Barry explained how the idea started:

*In 1995 Dr. John Middleton - Director of Public Health, Sandwell Primary Care Trust commissioned a feasibility study into community agriculture, looking at its potential in Sandwell, West Midlands. It looked at the benefits of using the land, growing food, physical activity, mental well-being, therapeutic gardening, to community where they could develop these activities and take their benefits to most needy, and tackle health problems.*

The garden was originally developed by a charity that works with disabled people providing therapeutic activities and developed into receiving funding from the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) to provide services for local vulnerable people. Nowadays, Salop Drive Market Garden is managed by Ideal for All a user led charity of disabled people and they are working closely with the Public Health institutional sector. Tim Botfield, a Horticultural Therapist, supervises and manages the activities and works with the individual to ensure that the therapies are appropriate for the specific needs (SUSTAIN, 2015).

Veronica Barry also explained that the garden has a sales scheme of fresh produce in box, for local households (70 a week) and for interested people. She said that that there are two ways to support the space financially: one is the sales scheme, the other way is through funding. The site is also used by schools for lessons, early year's groups, parents and children, individual allotment holders, for short term courses and workshops, festivals and community events.

Salop Drive Market Garden has different areas where it is possible to execute several activities, including a greenhouse, polytunnels, outdoor growing beds, toilets and hand washing facilities, classroom, limited off road parking, allotment plots, healing and decorative gardens and a wildlife area (see Fig. 6 and Fig. 7).

## CASE STUDIES BIRMINGHAM

# Salop Drive Market Garden

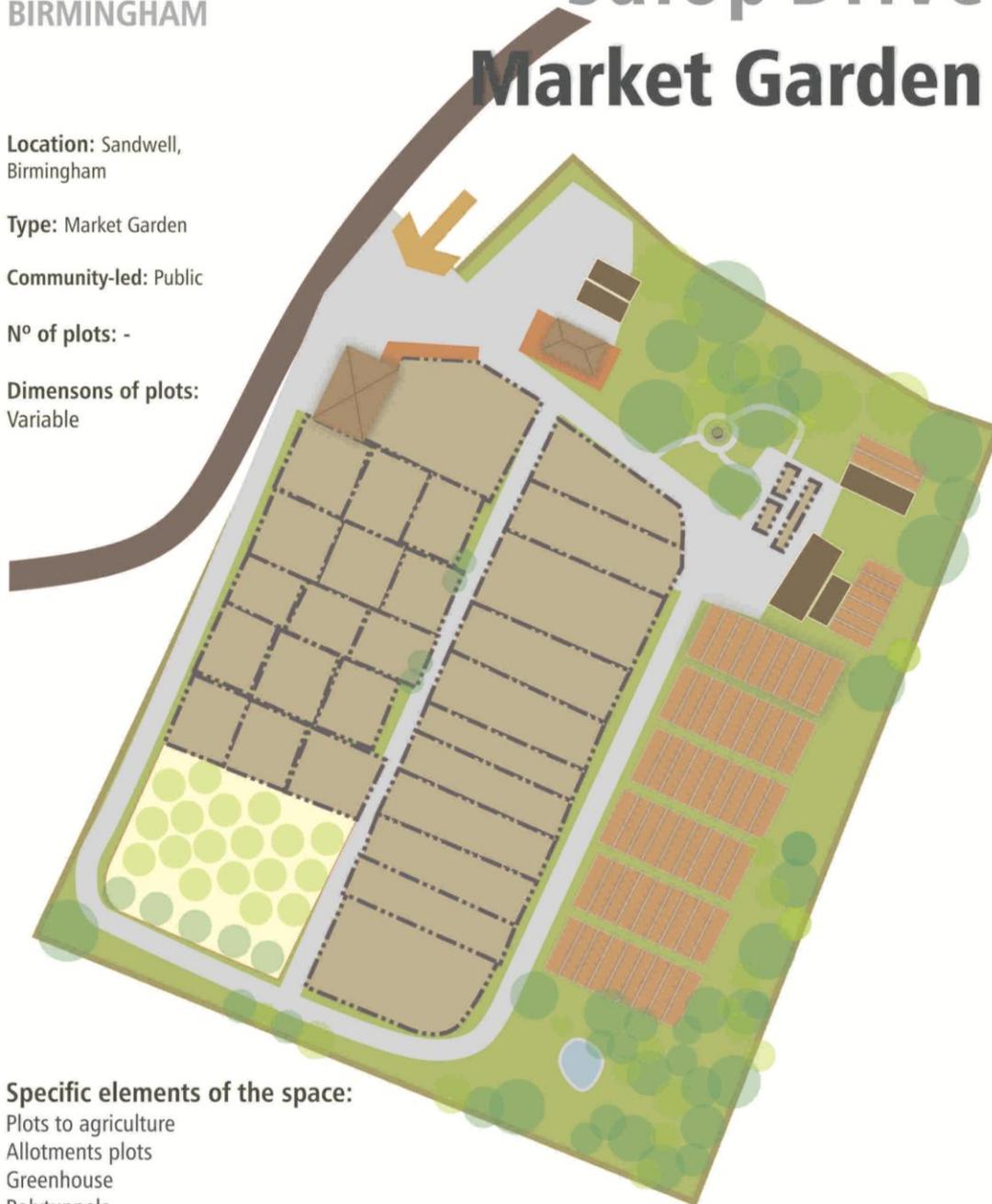
**Location:** Sandwell,  
Birmingham

**Type:** Market Garden

**Community-led:** Public

**N° of plots:** -

**Dimensions of plots:**  
Variable



### Specific elements of the space:

Plots to agriculture  
Allotments plots  
Greenhouse  
Polytunnels  
Outdoor growing beds  
Toilets  
Hand washing facilities  
Road parking

Healing and decorative garden  
Wildlife area  
Classroom with kitchen  
Orchard

CASE STUDY - 2

Figure 6 - Informative map of Salop Drive Market Garden. Adapted from Bing maps.



**Figure 7** – Salop Drive Market Garden. Pictures taken when visited the site. A: General view of space; B: Small community garden; C: Inside of Greenhouse; D: Wildlife area; E: Inside of polytunnels; F: Allotment plots; G: outdoor growing beds. Pictures Maria Sousa, 2015.

## Edible Eastside



Figure 8 – Edible Eastside. Location – Digbeth, Birmingham. Source: Bing maps.

Edible Eastside is a private project based in Digbeth, Birmingham, which idea was developed by Jane Bradley, one of the directors:

*Edible Eastside was created in 2011 by me. It's my concept and it is about a sustainable food project.... the project intends to bring together people who have interest in gardening or in growing their own food. We also invite people to be a part of a new cultural movement, bringing shared interests in art, food, urban post-industrial space, ecology and sustainability.*

The site, located at the canal side in an area of approximately 1000m<sup>2</sup>, was converted into a community and edible garden using temporary containers and raised beds (Fig. 8). The private initiative consisted in transforming a brownfield site into an exciting and contemporary urban garden for people to learn how to grow plants and food as Jane Bradley explained. She explained that the project started with the partnership with Birmingham City University (their students) and the Edible Eastside team that runs the project. This partnership was intended to explore issues of urban resilience, sustainable development, climate change and the role of culture in these mentioned issues.

In addition to giving life to a brownfield, this initiative has a set of objectives for the space. These objectives are explained in Edible Eastside (2015) website:

- to create an amazing new space in Birmingham where people can explore a new aesthetic in urban areas where productive and sustainable landscapes are integral;
- to teach skills and to demonstrate the value of considering alternative ways of doing food in cities;
- To raise the profile of food and urban agriculture in Birmingham and prepare for the future, become adaptable for a city with less fuel, water and resources;
- To show how important art & culture is to the transformation of space, place and cultural change and create a place that people want to visit that has integrity, is community-led, and emerges as a "Spontaneous Landscape".

The garden has made available several activities and services to concretize their goals, including renting out raised beds(Fig. 10) and selling their produce to restaurants in the city, promoting events with their partnerships, offering a space for artists and designers to research and experiment, and supporting and give guidance to community groups growing vegetables in the garden.

## CASE STUDIES

### BIRMINGHAM

# Edible Eastside

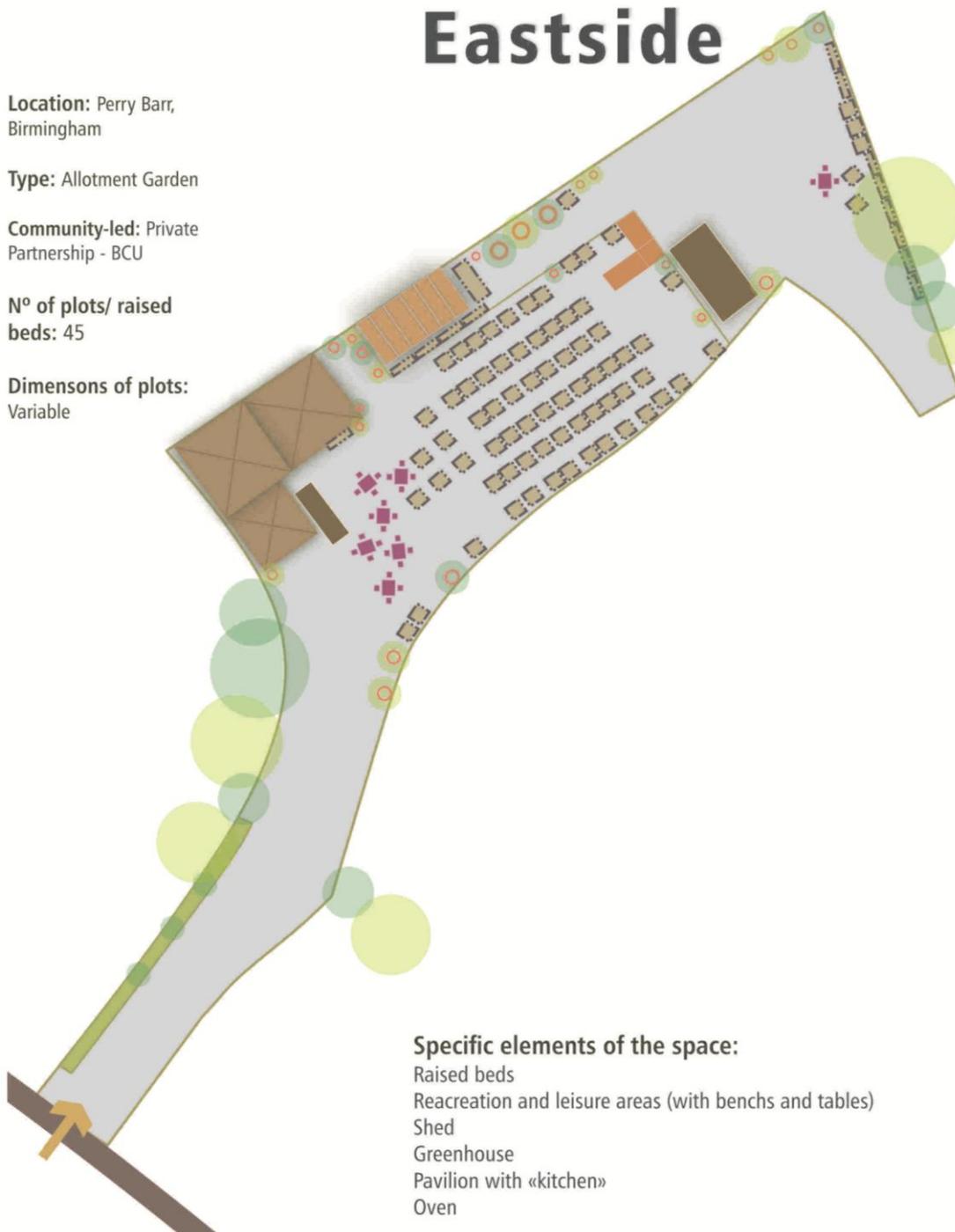
**Location:** Perry Barr, Birmingham

**Type:** Allotment Garden

**Community-led:** Private Partnership - BCU

**Nº of plots/ raised beds:** 45

**Dimensions of plots:** Variable



CASE STUDY - 3

Figure 9 - Informative map of Edible Eastside. Adapted from Bing maps.



Figure 10 – Edible Eastside. Pictures taken when visited the site. A: View from entrance; C, D: Raised beds; F: Stay area; G: General view. Pictures Maria Sousa, 2015.

## Walsall Road Allotments



Figure 11 – Walsall Road Allotments. Location – Perry Barr, Birmingham. Source: Bing maps.

Walsall Road Allotment (WRA), established in 2004 is a large multi-cultural allotment garden site set in the landscape grounds just next to the Alexander Athletics stadium in Perry Barr, in North Birmingham (Fig. 11). The site is owned by Birmingham City Council and is managed by a committee of unpaid volunteers (WRA, 2015).

The plots vary in size, standard-size plot (25ft x 130ft), small plot (25ft x 50ft) and mini-plot (25ft x 25ft). In addition to the plots, there is a large pavilion with a kitchen for the use of the plot-holders, and some structures such as greenhouse, toilets and sheds (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13) (WRA, 2015).

The Walsall Road site has proven to be a real meeting place for people of all backgrounds – who otherwise would not have the opportunity to grow own products. It is used by residents of different nationalities from all over the world including Bangladesh, Brazil, England, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mauritius, North Cyprus, Pakistan, Poland, West Indies and Zimbabwe (BM, 2015).

This site is about 11 or 12 years old, but in 2012 it went through a process of regeneration, supported by the ARI Programme. After its regeneration the site has become an important reference in the development and maintenance of productive areas in Birmingham. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to introduce a new approach and development in the WRA. The process began by creating a set of internal and external initiatives which could publicize and emphasize the qualities which the space could offer, from the promotion of exchange of goods and knowledge initiatives, to the appeal of foreign volunteers able to join the maintenance of the space. This strategy represented an important contribution to increasing the attractiveness of this location, in terms of both interested in growing own food and visitors.

## CASE STUDIES BIRMINGHAM

# Walsall Road Allotments

**Location:** Perry Barr,  
Birmingham

**Type:** Allotment Garden

**Community-led:** Public -  
Birmingham City Council

**N° of plots:** 97

**Dimensions of plots:**  
(25ft x 130ft)  
(25ft x 50ft)  
(25ft x 25ft)



### Specific elements of the space:

- Cultivation plots
- Green areas
- Recreation and leisure areas
- Sheds and Tool-sheds
- Toilets
- Large pavillion with kitchen
- Greenhouse
- Polytunnels on plots

CASE STUDY - 4

Figure 12 - Informative map of Walsall Road Allotments. Adapted from Bing maps.



Figure 13 – Walsall Road Allotments. Pictures taken when visited the site. A: Entrance and shop to sell products; B: Plots; C: Plots; D: Green space in front of Pavilion; E: Green area; F: Inside of pavilion. Pictures Maria Sousa, 2015.

### 3.2. Relevant institutional organisations

#### The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)



The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) is the national representative body for the allotment movement in the U.K.. They are governed by volunteers from their regional organisations in England and Wales and their membership comprises of members of allotments associations, societies and federations, schools, councils, landlords and individuals; although the majority of their members join through their allotment association. This body serves over 125,000 allotmenters, assisting them to acquire, maintain, manage and enjoy allotments across the country through regional networking, legal advice, allotments disposal – protect plots, support for councils and seed scheme and insurance (NSALG, 2015).

NSALG has a regional network of representatives and mentors who can give advice and support to associations, councils and plot-holders. They also take care of the rights of allotment holders and advise in matters concerning tenancy agreements, land disputes, rent rises and general misunderstandings. The organisation is small and includes six paid staff members based at their head office (Corby), and a group of volunteers that includes a Management Committee and three Local Authority representatives, a President and Treasurer (NSALG, 2015).

#### Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)



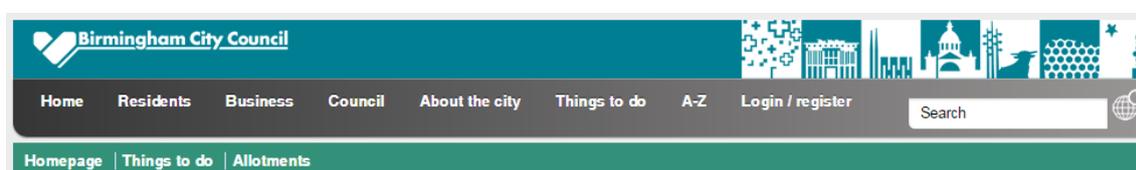
The FCFCG - Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, is the representative body that represents and promotes community-managed farms, allotments and other green spaces, creating opportunities for local communities to grow across the UK (FCFCG, 2015).

This organisation works with these community groups to help empower local people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in order to build better communities, in particular in deprived areas,

and to make a positive impact on their surrounding environment. Their work contributes to build better communities across the UK in both urban and isolated rural areas (FCFCG, 2015).

In practice, the FCFCG support directly their members through practical advice, site visits, information resources, training opportunities and networking events. They represent the interests and views of their members to regional, national and international bodies, which helps raise the profile of the whole community farming and gardening movement. Finally, they work in partnership with other organisations to create positive action on crucial issues, and to help members bringing further benefits to their local communities. They also work with key organisations across the UK countries and regions such as the NSALG (FCFCG, 2015).

## **Birmingham City Council (BCC)**



The BCC owns 114 allotment sites across Birmingham, covering 7,450 plots and around 6,200 tenants. The City Council works as the landlord for the sites, but almost all of the sites are managed on the Council's behalf by allotment associations, whose role is to manage the collection of rent, the letting of plots, and the general site management, said Nikki Bradley about the role of BCC on allotment sites. She also explained that there is a central allotments officer who oversees the work that the associations carry out, and also deals with other issues such as financial monitoring, tenancy issues and other landlord functions. The BCC, similarly to other local authorities across the UK, has responsibilities with these spaces and their duties are detailed in legislation regarding allotments existing in the UK.

The BCC has rules and guidance (a kind of handbook with rules about management, tenancy, structures allowed in the space and other issues) as the basis to run their sites and all associations must apply it, independently of the associations having their own constitutions, these must not contradict the city council rules.

Formal allotment land is differently allocated when compared to community gardens and other types of gardens. Even though the City Council has no direct relationship with the emergence and function of these spaces (e.g. CG and other) they do work with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in Birmingham on delivering many projects where "Growing sites" are being developed to encourage new people into growing food and to raise awareness of the health benefits that derive from this activity, as Nikki Brandley explained during the interview.

Currently BCC is reviewing how allotments gardens are structured as well as their institutional organisation. They are delegating functions and responsibilities to BDAC.

### **Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation (BDAC)**



The Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation is a council partner organisation that was created over 50 years ago. The BDAC is a volunteer based organisation that work with allotment associations in Birmingham, allotment holders & city council officials towards the benefit of allotments, as Clive Birch explained. BDAC support allotment associations with advice and information which enables them to carry out their tasks and they act as an active *"watch dog"* to ensure the City Council provides as much maintenance and repairs as possible for all sites, but also encouraging associations to take on self-management of their allotment sites. The BDAC play an active part in influencing allotment policy so that any changes are for the benefit of allotment holders and associations (BDAC, 2015).

This organisation provides shows and competitions for individuals and associations, makes a regular newsletter directed to all allotment associations, and provides measures to reduce rents for some users. The BDAC is a regional representative of th NSALG (BDAC, 2015).

In addition to the formally institutionalized initiatives that supports these spaces, there are many other initiatives that promote and help these areas to survive and stay active, as for example the Growing Birmingham and The Allotment Regeneration Initiative.

## Growing Birmingham (GB)



Growing Birmingham is an information hub about horticulture and local food growing in Birmingham. It presents an extensive list of food growing places and initiatives and shows who is growing what and where. Besides listing all of these places, Growing Birmingham promotes and generally celebrates all the people who grow fruit and vegetables in allotments, at the edges of some of the urban parks and gardens, in community orchards, hospitals and schools (Growing Birmingham, 2015).

## The Allotments regeneration initiative (ARI Programme)



The ARI Programme is a national programme to allotment regeneration. Launched in 2002, with the support of the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the ARI programme has made a great contribution regarding the interests and healthy state of allotments and food growing across the UK. Several successive grants from additional funders allowed the on-going development and success of the project, including The Big Lottery Fund's Local Food programme, Fund for the Environment and Urban Life and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that *is responsible for government policy on allotments* (ARI Programme, 2015).

Nowadays, ARI has reached its conclusion - but help is still available. Their website provides details of the programmes' achievements as well as details of the diversity of alternative sources of support and advice for those seeking to regenerate and promote allotments in the UK. This includes details for the continuation of the highly successful Allotment Mentor programme and Allotment Officers' Forums (see ARI website). Some of partners or mentors that work with ARI Programme are NSALG, FCGCG, CLAS. For example, CLAS supports communities seeking to gain access to land for community gardening and associated green space activities, through offering both operational help and online resources to landowners and community organisations (ARI Programme 2015)

### 3.3. Allotments legislation in the UK

The allotments gardens legislation has a long history in the UK, some of which originates from the nineteenth century. The current legislative provisions are contained in the Small Holdings and Allotment Acts 1908 and the Allotments Acts 1922-1950. The main laws and their sections which affect allotments in UK are summarized in the following table (Table1).

Table 1 – Allotments legislation. Adapted from <http://www.parliament.uk>.

ACT	Description and notes on most important Sections
<b>The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908</b>	<p><b>Repealed and consolidated previous legislation and established the framework for the modern allotments system.</b></p> <p><b>Section 23</b> provides that if allotment authorities are of the opinion that there is a demand for allotments...in the borough, district or parish the council shall provide a sufficient number of allotments to persons...resident in the borough district or parish and desiring the same. In determining demand an authority must take into consideration a representation in writing by any six registered parliamentary electors or rate payers.</p> <p><b>Section 25</b> gives a local authority the power to compulsorily purchase land for allotments if land cannot be acquired by private agreement.</p> <p><b>Section 26</b> provides that an allotments authority may make improvements to allotment land such as drainage, paths and hut construction.</p> <p><b>Section 32</b> deals with the Sale of superfluous or unsuitable land and permits local authorities to sell land if they are of opinion that any land ... is not needed for the purpose of allotments. However, Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 places restrictions on this process.</p> <p><b>Section 47</b> deals with compensation for allotment holders who are required to leave the site. These provisions were amended by the Allotments Act 1922.</p>
<b>Land Settlement Facilities Act 1919</b>	<p><b>This Act was mainly to assist returning servicemen and opened up allotments to all, not just 'the labouring population'.</b></p> <p>Made metropolitan borough councils allotment authorities for the first time.</p> <p><b>Section 22</b> enables an allotment authority to appropriate for allotments any land held for other purposes.</p>
<b>Allotments Act 1922</b>	<p><b>This Act was established to provide allotment tenants with some security of tenure, laying down specific periods of notice and compelling most allotment authorities to appoint allotment committees, and provided tenants with greater compensation at the termination of their tenancy.</b></p> <p><b>Section 1</b> provides that an allotment garden tenancy may be determined by the landlord by notice to quit only if a six months or longer notice is given. This provision was amended by Section 1 of the Allotments Act 1950.</p> <p><b>Section 2</b> provides for compensation on being forced to quit an allotment, based on the value of the crops.</p> <p><b>Section 16</b> required allotments authorities to exact a 'full fair rent' for allotments. This provision was repealed by Section 10 of the Allotments Act 1950.</p> <p><b>Section 22</b> defines 'allotment gardens' as 'an allotment not exceeding forty poles in extent which is mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetables and fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family'.</p>

<b>Allotments Act 1925</b>	<p><b>This Act was intended to facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of allotments, and to make further provision for the security of tenure of tenants of allotments.</b></p> <p><b>Section 3</b> specifies that when a local authority is preparing a town-planning scheme, it must consider what provisions ought to be included therein for the reservation of land for allotments. This provision was repealed by the <b>Town and Country Planning Act 1947</b>.</p> <p><b>Section 8</b> specifies that land purchased or appropriated by local authorities for use as allotments must not be disposed of without Ministerial consent. The Secretary of State must be satisfied that adequate provision will be made for allotment holders displaced by the action of the local authority, or that such provision is unnecessary or not reasonably practicable'.</p> <p><b>Section 12</b> provided that a local authority with a population of over 10,000 should appoint an allotments committee which is responsible for all allotment matters with the exception of financial issues. This provision was repealed by the Local Government Act 1972.</p>
<b>Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1926</b>	<p><b>Made minor amendments to previous Acts but was mostly concerned with small holdings.</b></p> <p>Repealed sections 1-22 of Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 which related to small holdings.</p>
<b>Agricultural Land (Utilisation) Act 1926</b>	<p><b>Temporary measure passed at time of economic depression to assist the unemployed.</b></p> <p>Section 13 permitted the seizure of land for allotments and gave the Minister of Agriculture authority to provide allotments for the unemployed. This provision expired in 1939 under Section 19.</p>
<b>Town and Country Planning Act 1947</b>	<p><b>Made no specific reference to allotments but removed requirement made in 1925 Act for town planning authorities to consider allotment provision within town planning schemes</b></p>
<b>Allotments Act 1950</b>	<p><b>Followed on from the Allotments Advisory Committee report of 1949. Made provision for better compensation following termination of tenancies, and clarified the systems for collecting rent.</b></p> <p><b>Section 1</b> increases the period of notice to be supplied to allotment holders to 12 months and this must expire during the winter months.</p> <p><b>Sections 2 to 6</b> deal with the compensation which should be payable to an allotment holder according to the season his tenancy terminates. Also, allotment holders who have allowed their plots to deteriorate through neglect are liable to pay for compensation for dilapidations on quitting.</p> <p><b>Section 9</b> confines local authorities obligation to allotment gardens- in effect, making farm allotments no longer statutory.</p> <p><b>Section 10</b> amends the rent collection systems and allotments authorities may charge such rent "... as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land". This section also makes provision for the allotments authority to let land "... to a person at a less rent, if the Council are satisfied that there exist special circumstances affecting the person which render it proper for them to let the land at a less rent".</p> <p><b>Section 12</b> allows certain forms of livestock to be kept although this is, in some cases, restricted by local bye-laws.</p>

**Local Government,  
Planning and Land  
Act 1980**

**Abolished a number of minor Ministerial controls over a local authority's administration of allotments**

Consolidated planning legislation which has further influenced the forward planning of allotments. This provision is ensured in Acquisition of Land (Amendment) Act 1981

The table shows that the different Acts and Sections emphasise the various obligations that regional and local authorities have to respond while managing such spaces. The following are important aspects that the allotment laws in the UK mention in relation to the City Councils duties:

- City Councils have a duty to provide a sufficient number of allotments; they have the power to purchase land including the power to purchase compulsory land for the purpose of providing allotments (Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908).
- City Councils have the power to make the necessary regulations in order to regulate the leasing of allotments, to lay down rules regarding the eligibility of tenants (fixing of rents) and make rules about how their plots should be cultivated (Allotments Act 1950 and Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908).
- City Councils should preserve existing land used as allotments. The loss of this land should only be considered when: there is no search for these sites or if the allotments are not in use. This measure is described on planning legislation which has further influence on the planning of allotments (Local Government and Planning Act 1980). The legislation also requires town planning authorities to give a special attention to allotments when preparing town planning schemes.

The following are important aspects that the planning laws in the UK consider to protect the plot-holders:

- Their tenancies cannot be terminated unless plot holders are advised to at least 6 months in advance (Allotments Act 1922).
- The statutory allotments were established so that a local authority can not sell or convert allotments sites for other purposes without the ministerial consent. The Allotments Act 1925 is intended to facilitate the acquisition of allotments and to make further provision for the security of tenure for tenants (Allotments Act 1925).
- The law protect the tenants about the value of rents; the Allotments Act 1950 says that as a tenant rent should be kept at a reasonable value.

### **3.4. Compilation of the results**

The tables presented below compiles the main aspects associated with the aims of this work which derived from the interviews (and small informal conversations), and from the literature review and online content. These are organized according to the different types of institutional organisations verified, and structured according to the aims of this study. The table considers the following aspects:

1. the type of institutional organization
2. the role of organisation
3. how are they structured
4. the reasons for the emergence
5. benefits of organizational structure
6. future advices for future organizations

The table includes both the case studies sites that were visited, and some of the national and local institutions that play an active role in the studied area and are fundamental to the successful operation of local / individual associations.

Table 2 – Summarized results of the case studies.

TYPE OF INSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION AND YEAR OF THEIR ESTABLISHMENT	ROLE OF THIS ORGANISATION	INTERNAL STRUCTURE HOW ARE THEY STRUCTURED	REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE	BENEFITS OF BEING A INSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION	HOW TO FORM A ASSOCIATION? THE MAIN STEPS/SUPPORT
<p><b>NATIONAL</b></p> <p>NSALG 1901</p> <p><b>Community-led</b> Public</p>	<p>Representative body for the allotment movement in the UK. This society serves allotment holders assisting them to acquire, maintain, manage and enjoy allotments across the U.K. They can advise and support associations, councils and plot holders. They also help associations to marketing their products, fight for the rights of allotment holders, and advise regarding tenancy agreements, land disputes, rent rises and misunderstandings. They provide a regional network, general legal advice, advice on allotment disposal, support for councils, and regarding seed scheme and insurance.</p>	<p>Dynamic organisation with six paid staff, based at the head office; the rest of people working in this body are volunteers. They have:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional representative bodies which can help to identify the local allotment society, give advice and support around issues such as fundraising, setting up an association, self management and site regeneration/creation or signpost to the right person; they deal with local member issues and represent their members views at official tenancy meetings concerning their sites. They provide articles to the allotment and leisure gardener magazine, one of the most popular member benefits.</li> <li>2. Allotment mentors, which is a team of volunteer experts throughout the UK. They give help and support to anyone managing or creating allotments; they have direct experience of supporting the development of allotment sites and associations at a local level. The service is free and the mentors will work with anyone in the allotment community.</li> </ol>	<p>NSALG was created in 1901, as a members' co-operative. Even today they operate as an industrial and provident society, being owned, managed and funded by their members.</p>	<p>A national allotment association can bring many benefits: working together can help local associations and groups to raise funds for their sites improvement, support development and help to sustain the future of the site. Being a member of NSALG gives the association access to affordable public liability insurance for sites and other benefits such as cheaper seeds. As NASLG members you would have access to legal advisor - who can assist in the preparation of a range of tenancy agreements and give advice on agreements that associations enter into with councils or private landlords. The members can obtain initial advice on a wide range of topics including, allotment legislation health and safety, environmental issues, contractual problems, data protection, governance and disputes, along with assistance if the site becomes under threat of disposal.</p>	<p>From the NSALG perspective, to create an allotment association it is essential to follow the following aspects: to create a constitution and set of rules, the formation of a committee with a chair, secretary and treasurer. Also, it is necessary to hold regular meetings and members responsibilities will vary depending on whether you are direct let or self- managed and the level of self- management. Their legal advisor, regional representatives and allotment mentors can all give advice on how to form and run an association.</p>
<p><b>NATIONAL</b></p> <p>FCFCG 1980</p> <p><b>Community-led</b></p>	<p>The representative body that represents and promotes community-managed farms, allotments and other green spaces, creating opportunities for</p>	<p>This national body has offices in different places: England Wales Scotland These offices provide support services, advice and information resources specifically for these sites.</p>	<p>FCFCG exists since 1980, and helps improve people's lives. They defend that city farms and</p>	<p>To help new and emerging groups, primarily in England, FCFCG has launched a Local Food project. Funded by the Local Food Programme from the Big Lottery Fund, the project provides direct</p>	<p>How can FCFCG help? They offer advice on all aspects of community-managed city farming and community gardening, including: Animal husbandry and welfare,</p>

<p><b>Public</b></p>	<p>local communities to grow across the UK. Their work contributes to creating better communities across the UK in both urban and isolated rural areas. FCFCG support directly their members through practical advice, site visits, information resources, training opportunities and networking events. They represent the interests and views of their members to regional, national and international bodies, which helps raise the profile of the whole community farming and gardening movement and finally they work in partnership with other organisations to create positive action on crucial issues.</p>	<p>community gardens are not simply nice places to visit where plants are grown and animals kept, they assume that these community projects also offer a great range of benefits and opportunities which can include education programmes, play schemes, healthy living initiatives, work and skills training, social enterprises, volunteer opportunities, environmental schemes, horticultural therapy groups, facilities for people with disabilities and other ones.</p>	<p>support to new and existing food growing groups through our team of development workers. This support includes advice, training and networking events. FCFCG is also providing information resources and funding information.</p>	<p>community involvement, funding and budgeting, horticulture, land use management, legal requirements, committee and management roles, working with young people, volunteers and people with special needs, planning and design, and staffing. They also put users in touch with a city farm or community garden within the user travelling distance and provide advice and support on the community management of gardens and farms. Advice can be given by correspondence on the telephone or on site where appropriate. The Federation have also a city farm and community garden starter packs, which can help those who are planning to start up a new group.</p>
<p><b>Municipally</b>  Birmingham City Council  <b>Community led Public Partnership – BDAC and Associations</b></p>	<p>The City Council owns 114 allotment sites across Birmingham. The City Council works as the landlord for the sites and creates regulations that associations have to follow. The allotment associations are volunteer plot-holders from their sites who take on roles such as</p>	<p>Almost all of the sites are managed on the Council's behalf by allotment associations, who manage the collection of rent, letting of plots, general plot and site management. There is a central allotments officer who oversees the work that the associations carry out, and also deals with other issues such as financial monitoring, tenancy issues and other landlord functions. They have a partner to help in the management of these spaces - BDAC. BCC have local advisors, volunteers that assist the</p>	<p>Allotment associations offer the site more opportunities to improve their surroundings and to begin growing a sense of community on their site, so BCC actively encourage sites to form and maintain an association. More than encourage, the BCC provide people and organisations to help the local associations to run and survive.</p>	<p>First, contact BDAC, who would guide them through the process of setting up an Association and agreeing a constitution. Once this is in place, they will be asked by the allotments officer to sign the formal management agreement between the committee and the City Council. Once this is signed,</p>

	chairperson, secretary, treasurer etc.	associations and help run the sites, and produces the allotment rules for sites based on Section 28 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.			the BCC can recognize the volunteers as an active association and will offer the training and support that they need to ensure that they can manage the site.
<b>INDIVIDUAL/LOCAL ALLOTMENT GARDEN</b> Walsall Road Allotment (WRA)  <b>2003</b>  <b>Community led Public</b>	<p>Main goals and roles of this association are: To promote the interests of all members in their gardening activities, including co-operating with other gardening associations. To conduct negotiations with the local authority and take action to protect members and their plots against damage, trespass and theft. To work to improve the condition of the site and to encourage and educate others to do the same.</p>	<p>WRA are owned by Birmingham City Council and self-managed by unpaid committee of plot-holders - chair, treasurer and secretary, these members have a plot and they are on site every day. They have own rules, based on BCC rules - some aspects are different, they consider BCC "rules very strike". The Association is responsible for the space, maintenance, and for keeping the space in activity. They only received 10% of the rents that plot-holders pay to BCC.</p>	<p>The space was created about 11 or 12 years ago. In 2012 WRA was target by the ARI Programme to improve its attractiveness and function, and develop a new gardening approach. This included internal and external initiatives that publicize and emphasize the qualities that space could offer, from the promotion of exchanging of goods and knowledge initiatives, until the call of outside volunteers to join the maintenance space.</p>	<p>"The committee or people's committee are always present in the allotment, every day, making it possible to promptly solve any question or problem. Doubts can be taken at anytime." The committee runs the site and promotes activities in space, competition between plot-holders, and open store to sell products. The committee of association fight to raise funding to the space ( they got a greenhouse through the Big Lottery fund)</p>	
<b>INDIVIDUAL/LOCAL COMMUNITY GARDEN</b> Martineau Gardens  <b>1997</b>  <b>Community led Private</b>	<p>The main functions of this organisation are to run and manage the space. Their mission is to inspire people about the natural environment - to protect, promote, and preserve good health for the benefit of the general public. They also provide volunteering opportunities in the garden and are a</p>	<p>The staff is composed by six members and includes: a director, two other colleagues that are horticultural therapists; there is also a person who takes care of marketing and communications, another one who works in fundraising - her job is to find the money to keep going the space, and also an administrator. There are the Trustees, who are legal and financially responsible for the organisation. They are elected by membership monthly or annually to become a member of it. The funding comes mostly from Charitable Trusts.</p>	<p>Martineau Gardens started from an Environment Studies Centre, that there was for Junior School Students and this was ran by City Council. In 1997 the City Council closed the space. So a group of people had the idea of creating</p>	<p>There is a well-structured organisation which brings benefits on several levels: Employ people - employment skilled people who manage activities and can work with different types of people who frequent the space. With these skilled people, it was possible to keep the space open 6 days a week; previously it was just open for a few days. Daily monitoring - problems can be</p>	<p>" There are 3 important things: People, money and land. The most important is human-being, the right kind of human being. People who are interested in working during a long-term on space. Search and find the right people are a long process and you need a long time. You need to dedicate your time to raise money to build and</p>

	<p>venue for educational activities.</p> <p>Other ways of funding includes community funds and individual donation (memberships) and through the selling (plants, vegetables, compost, rent space for parties).</p> <p>The staff works to create a contract to someone to want to rent the space for some kind of the events or parties. For visitors, volunteers, and people with mental health problems, the entrance is free.</p>	<p>a community garden with therapeutic horticulture. <i>But a group of people passionate about gardening was not enough</i>, it took people with time and skills in order to have therapeutic and environmental activities, raise funds, organize things.</p> <p>solved in the moment. The fact that there is a team that focuses on management of space, arrange funds and promoting space, makes this aspect to become the base for the development of this space.</p>	<p><i>maintain the space. The land, it is the last thing you need think about, because, first you need gather people and money. After you get the land you need to have a good relationship with the landowner. For example, in Martineau Gardens they only paid a small rent by the space. Their main expense is the salaries of employees."</i></p>
<p><b>INDIVIDUAL/LOCAL</b></p> <p>Market Garden Salop Drive Market Garden</p> <p>1999</p> <p><b>Community led Public</b></p>	<p>The organisation of this space runs the space, by promoting general and specific services, and providing a year round programme of garden based and outreach activities, social events, therapeutic gardening, vocational training and short courses, in order to improve health and well-being and maintain and support independence.</p> <p>Salop Drive is managed by Ideal for All, a user-led charity of disabled people. It led on the development of the community agriculture programme for Sandwell, working closely with Public Health. The members of staff include Tim Botfield, who is a Horticultural Therapist, and his colleague supervised by him, and they managed the activities. They work with the individual person to ensure that activities are correct for their specific needs. Volunteer work is done by gardeners who work in the project, taking part in the day to day work of the garden.</p> <p>The market garden receive funding of the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), because they work with disabled and vulnerable people; other funds comes from Charitable sources and trading goods and services into the community.</p> <p>The garden has also a sales scheme of fresh produce in box, for local households (70 a week) and for interested people. The sales are one the other way to support financially the space.</p> <p>The site is also used by schools for lessons, early year's groups, parents and children, individual allotment holders, for short term courses and</p>	<p>Salop Drive Market Garden was created in 1999. The idea was developed the site in an abandoned allotment garden. Community Agriculture Programme recognized potential in Sandwell and looked at the benefits of using the land for growing food, physical activity, mental well-being, therapeutic gardening and community development. The main goal was to develop beneficial activities for the</p> <p>Ideal for All enables projects to be developed following a community development process, meaning that all users are involved in decision making and shaping the development of projects. It is community-led meaning the service users manage the organisation through a board and committee structure.</p>	<p><i>"It is a long process; in this case it took about 5 years. In addition to the whole process of getting land, get funding were necessary analysis of soil contaminations that are expensive. It is also necessary to get a license lease by the council to be able to use the space during a time or permanently. Then it 's important to do some consulting in the local community to understand local needs, what they think about the project, if they are receptive to the project etc. Another important thing is money. It is necessary to have qualified people with skills to support the various types of users, and is necessary pay to those people. Sell products is an important step to raise</i></p>

		workshops, festivals and community events.	most needy and to tackle health problems.	<i>funds. It's a hard work to get balance between police, money and community. Need proper management structure with which to work. Also need strong networks with others including health, social services etc need to fit in with wider strategic priorities."</i>	
<p><b>INDIVIDUAL/LOCAL</b></p> <p><b>Brownfield – Pop-up garden</b> Edible Eastside</p> <p><b>2011</b></p> <p><b>Community led Private Partnership - BCU</b></p>	<p>Mainly the project intends to bring people who have interest in gardening or in growing their own food. They also invite people to be a part of a new cultural movement, bringing shared interests in art, food, urban post-industrial space, ecology and sustainability. The responsible people make regular events. They have an active programme during May until September. This programme is supported by their partnerships.</p>	<p>The leaseholder of the site is Urban Grain, a non profit company. The Directors of Urban Grain are Jayne Bradley and Cathy Wade. In 10 years they have got funding from a public entity that helps in regeneration projects. To run the project they work with people that do community service and some volunteers help things happening. People can rent raised beds to growing food (£100.00 per annum). People who rent a raised bed, has to sign an agreement with leaseholder. This agreement is about functional issues of space. The project is about growing and learning about food, and for this reason is not possible to sell the produce.</p>	<p>Edible Eastside was created in 2011 by Jayne Bradley. The project started from a partnership between BCU and their students and the Edible Eastside team manager. The project emerged because Jayne "... wanted to prove that an industrial area, polluted, with contaminated soil could be transformed and that good things could happen in this context." With the project she can show that this area can improve even environmentally.</p>	<p>This organisation offers t opportunities to improve a sense of community on their site. Having responsible people for the place brings benefits: They make partnerships that support activities and workshops in space, They have an agreement, which represents security to users - rights and duties of gardener and leaseholder.</p>	<p><i>"The first is to find available land. Then, it is necessary to contact the local authorities to realize that they point out sites to develop this kind of project. Then it 's necessary to take into account the location of the site that is chosen, to see whether you can close the gates, if it 's safe. This measure is important because some sites are more susceptible to vandalism than others. You wanted to gather a good team of people to guide the project and good support to make it possible. Mainly you need people with a passion for community, sustainable places and growing food."</i></p>

## 4. Discussion

The results of this study reveal that in Birmingham there are several types of institutional organisations serving the allotment gardens and other urban spaces that hold growing activities. They are organized across different levels, from local to national organisations. Thus, there is a hierarchy in how these spaces are organized and supported. However, this pyramidal organisation is only clearly observed in the allotment gardens and community gardens. To note that in this study other types of urban growing spaces which show differences from the previous mentioned two were also included. Moreover, it was possible to observe the existence of other supportive platforms, such as Growing Birmingham and the ARI Programme which provide some sort of support to different areas.

Focusing on their institutional organisation different types can be revealed:

**National Institutions** – Regional representatives;

**Municipal Institutions** – City Council working with another institution municipally organized;

**Associations** – Local or Individual associations that manage different spaces or private landowner.

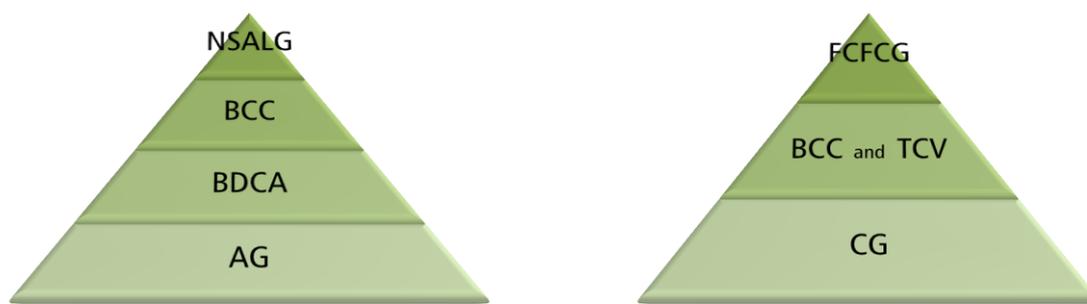


Figura 14 - "Hierarchization" of institutional organisation of allotment gardens and community gardens in Birmingham

### The legislation of allotments on institutional organizations

The proper functioning of allotments underlies the compliance and implementation of the terms and rules set by the planning legislation. The major concerns of allotment holders and local authorities are associated with processes governing the disposal of allotment land, the demanding for allotments and how this is met, and the policies governing the use of the plot.

The English planning laws have a long history and nowadays they are the main pieces of legislation that are broadly applied. The different Acts and Sections emphasise the various obligations that regional and local authorities have to respond while managing such spaces.

In short, the legislation requires local authorities and their agents to assurance that all policies, practices, procedures and decisions taken respect the law. Besides giving some power and duties to local authorities these acts also safeguard the interests of plot-holders, particularly regarding their interests in matters related to the leasing contracts.

To sum up, the legislation is an important support in the implementation process and management of allotments, as well as in the protection of both allotment sites and plot-holders.

### **Role of the institutional organisation and reasons for the emergence**

Relatively to the roles that they develop, it can be noted that the national or municipal institutions have a more focused role in guidance, support and development of these areas: training, legal advice, land indications, on the demand for monetary funds, etc. However, it was noticeable that the associations have already a more active role in the daily management of the spaces, and they are the ones who often fight for their protection and conservation and who look after of their users' interests.

The role of each institution is entirely related to the reasons for which they emerge. Local associations are developed taking into consideration the interests of the communities that are using them, such as maintaining the most important existing projects. However, for some reason many are in decline or about to be closed. The National and Municipal institutions emerge with the aim of promoting these spaces and to help local associations in their management by offering them the necessary support.

### **Structure**

Regarding the organisational structure of these institutions there are some disagreements. The first difference is related to the remuneration of their workers. The national and municipal-oriented institutions have people who are paid, although there are a large number of volunteers working with them. In local associations only specialized people are paid. Even the staff from the associations management is unpaid. But this aspect is not always verified.

Other differences are in the way they organize themselves internally. As mentioned earlier, national institutions have regional bodies and local mentors to move and act faster and closely to the local communities. The municipal institutions work with other types of organized institutions operating closer to local associations. Finally, local associations are usually organized by a staff or committee constituted by a Chair, Secretary and Treasure. The functions of each member are well defined in some

cases, as in the case of Martineau Gardens, where these members work hard to find funding for their garden and in the promotion and dissemination of their activities.

The associations have many responsibilities in their care. They create their own regulations, although these are based on regulations made by municipal institutions.

The associations are also responsible for carrying out activities in the spaces; these include workshops, sales, activities to outsiders, etc. This openness to outsiders is very important because it is often via these activities that the associations can finance the spaces (employ skilled people, and ensure the maintenance of spaces), as the raised funds aren't enough for all the expenses.

### **Benefits of being institutionally organized**

One of the advantages of using open-ended interviews as a method for data collection is the freedom that the interviewees feel to respond openly to any subject. This point was beneficial to the results of this work, allowing revealing the interviewees opinions of the many benefits that these institutions bring to the management and support to these spaces.

Among others, what stood out was the regular presence of the staff responsible. For example, daily monitoring – allows problems to get solved and doubts cleared in the moment and to work on possibilities for raising funds to improve the space - including employing skilled people to guide gardeners and to respond to their different and specific needs.

The benefits pointed out for the existence of local and/or national institutions emphasize the importance of the support they provide, especially in an initial phase, where there are many doubts and uncertainties. It is also mentioned that they contribute greatly to preserve the interests of users. For example, the work developed by the BDAC was important to negotiate lower rents for users who have to pay the council for their plot.

Finally, it was possible to obtain some information about the aspects which should be kept in mind when someone wants to create an association. The National /Municipally institutions advise to have regular meetings, to be monitored by the Local advisor and to have contact with other existing associations for exchanging experiences. On the other hand, local associations essentially indicate that there are main three important things: People (qualified people, interested people), Funding, and Land. Other factors are also mentioned regarding legal license to use land and the local community - their opinion and receptivity for the project are important aspects in the development of the whole process.

## 5. Conclusion

This study focused on four case studies that represent the diversity of urban gardens for growing food and on the different existing institutional organisations in Birmingham. It shows that the city of Birmingham has a great variety of spaces where its inhabitants can practice urban gardening - allotment gardens and community gardens represented in different forms. These spaces have a big influence on the lives of their users because they offer a wide range of benefits and activities. These activities bring many cultural, therapeutic, educational and environmental benefits that improve the quality of life of the people using and looking after these spaces.

Focusing on the study of the institutional organisation of allotment gardens and similar spaces, it was identified a hierarchy in which one institution supports another, which in turn are primarily supported by, and have to respond to, the existing national laws. This organisational structure starts on a national level down to a local level, and all constituent bodies have different functions. It was also found that in addition to official and organized institutions, there are other types of informal support such as online platforms and supporting groups. The existing national planning laws are an important tool to guide and legally support the implementation process and management of allotments, as well as to protect them and plot-holders in, for example, processes of governing the sale for land development.

Regarding their roles, it can be noted that the national and municipal institutions have a more focused role in guidance, support and development of these areas, while the local associations have a more active role in the daily management of the spaces, in their protection and conservation and look for their users' interests. This is a clear distinction that can be put into practice in the Portuguese and other similar cases. The local associations create their own regulations, although based on regulations made by municipal institutions, and are also responsible for carrying out activities in the spaces. The regular presence of the staff responsible acquires a very important dimension, as it allows for issues to be solved in the moment, contact with the gardeners, to raise funds and to contribute to preserve the interests of the users.

There are, however, some disagreements regarding the remuneration of their committee or staff and in the way they are organized internally. National institutions have normally paid members of staff and have regional bodies and local mentors to move and act faster and closely to the local communities. The municipal institutions work with other types of organized institutions that operate closer to the groups interested in the activity. Local associations are usually organized by unpaid staff or committee, constituted by a Chair, Secretary and Treasure.

Finally, it is concluded that each institutional organisation has an important, and to a great extent, a distinct role in contributing to the creation and management of these types of spaces and that a having a hierarchical organisation seems to be also important for their success. These results can give

insights about the aspects to be taken into consideration for emergent allotment gardens, community gardens and similar in countries where this type of space has not a tradition and wish to organize themselves around structured societies or associations.

During this study it was understood how to organize institutionally allotment gardens and how allotments legislation is put into practice through the existence of bodies/ associations local and national, as well as the benefits of the existence of such organized structures.

As previously stated, Portugal has not yet a legal national framework regarding these places. At present, it is notorious the increasing interest in this activity especially provoked by the current economic situation and consequent social changes in the country. These are the factors responsible for a great number of UAG, in different contexts and aiming to provide social support and help the family economy, but municipalities are starting to recognize the importance and benefits of allotments as contributing to the resilience of the city, landscape valorisation and social integration. However, there are some gaps relating to public awareness about these areas that are still not in line with efforts to frame allotments in general policy and sometimes even within local regulations (Rodrigues et al. 2014). Nonetheless, some of the local public and private entities have been making major efforts to counter this situation ("Horta à Porta" and similar organized programmes), but lacks a deeper involvement in management of those engaging in the activity and holding a plot. It is within this context that this study can be a major contribution to the Portuguese recently emerged formal allotments. Why not begin by developing a structure that can start organizing people and authorities to work together to create something more solid in order to achieve the good examples coming from the UK example? Initially making plot-holders aware of the importance of an association, what are the main benefits for them and how social and spatial conditions as well as the general activity can ameliorate. Then, these local associated groups together with municipal promoters (or private promoters) can create a local lobby in order to attempt influencing decision-makers, regulatory agencies, or governments.

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## 7. Appendix

### Interview questions

#### **Edible EastSide**

Jayne Bradley – Director of Edible Eastside

- Can you tell me about how Edible Eastside was created? Who had the idea? What were the first steps of the process? And why here in this area (Digbeth)?
- Who is involved in the management of this space? Do you get any funding?
- With regard to space management: Maintenance is made by whom? By the people who rent the "plots"?
- Is there any kind of rules/regulations if someone wants to use this space?
- Do users have to pay any fee for the use of space?
- Is this a temporary garden? Who owns the space?
- If temporary, what are the risks associated with that term?
- Are you open to the general public (or to outsiders). Can they come here and have a coffee with you/the gardeners/the users.
- What would you say to someone who wants to start a project such as Edible Eastside? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?

## **Salop Drive Market Garden**

Veronica Bar- ran the Sandwell Project during several years. She worked in Salop Drive Market Garden from 1999-2014

- **Can you tell me about how Salop Drive Market Garden was created? Who had the idea? What were the first steps of the process? And why here in this area?**
- **Who is involved in the management of this space? Do you get any funding?**
- **With regard to space management: Maintenance is made by whom? By the people who rent /works the "plots"?**
- **Is there any kind of rules/regulations if someone wants to use this space?**
- **Do users have to pay any fee for the use of space?**
- **Is this a temporary garden? Who owns the space?**
- **Are you open to the general public (or to outsiders). Can they come here and work or socialize with you/the gardeners/the users.**
- **What would you say to someone who wants to start a project such as Salop Drive Market Garden? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?**

## **Martineau Garden**

Caroline Hutton – Director of Martineau Garden

- **Can you tell me about how Martineau Garden was created? Who had the idea? What were the first steps of the process? And why here in this area?**
- **Who is involved in the management of this space? Do you get any funding?**
- **With regard to space management: Maintenance is made by whom?**
- **Is there any kind of rules/regulations if someone wants to use this space?**
- **Do users have to pay any fee for the use of space?**
- **Is this a temporary garden? Who owns the space?**
- **Are you open to the general public (or to outsiders). Can they come here and have a coffee with you/the gardeners/the users.**
- **What would you say to someone who wants to start a project such as Martineau Garden? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?**
- **This Community Garden is connected to FCFCG (Federation of City Farms and CG)? What are the benefits of this connection?**

## **Walsall Road Allotments**

Betty Farruggia - She is the Committee Secretary of Walsall Road Allotment

- **Can you tell me about how Walsall Road Allotments were created? Who had the idea? What were the first steps of the process? And why here in this area?**
- **How are structured your allotment Association?**
- **What is the role of the Association to the local authorities (City Council and Birmingham And District Allotments Confederation)?**
- **Who is involved in the management of this space? Do you get any funding?**
- **With regard to space management: Maintenance is made by whom? By the people who rent the "plots"?**
- **Is there any kind of rules/regulations if someone wants to use this space? Can I see it? Is it possible to give me an exemplar?**
- **Do users have to pay any fee for the use of space?**
- **What are the benefits that exist in this space have an association to manage? or Aren't there benefits?**
- **Are you open to the general public (or to outsiders). Can they come here and work or socialize with you/the gardeners/the users.**
- **What would you say to someone who wants to start a project such as Walsall Road Allotments? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?**

## **Birmingham City Council (BCC)**

Nikki Bradley - Allotments Officer (Parks and Nature Conservation)

- **What is the role of the Birmingham City Council in the management and promotion of allotment gardens in Birmingham?**
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- **Which institutions are involved in the management of the allotments? Is BDAC an institution/association which works with Birmingham City Council or part?**
- **Can you tell me about how (and why) Birmingham And District Allotments Confederation (BDAC) was created? What were the first steps of the process?**
- **What is the role of the Council Birmingham And District Allotments Confederation?**
- **Who funds the allotments? Do you get any funding from someone or somewhere, apart the city council?**
- **Do associations of allotment gardens have its own internal regulations? Do they always support in the existing regulation of Birmingham city council?**
- **Does the Birmingham City Council make regular visits to local associations to check if the regulations are followed and everything works properly? How do you make sure all rules are followed?**
- **Are there any penalties for those who don't comply with the rules?**
- **Do allotments associations have to pay any kind of annual fee to the Birmingham City Council? What is the purpose of this fee?**
- **What would you say to someone who wants to start an Allotment Gardens association? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?**

- Is Birmingham City Council liaising the responsibility of other places for growing food, such as CG, with other associations or institutions?

## **Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation (BDAC)**

Clive Birch – Chair of the Birmingham and District Allotments Confederation

- Which institutions are involved in the management of the allotments? Is BDAC an institution/association which works with Birmingham City Council or part?
- Can you tell me about how (and why) Birmingham And District Allotments Confederation (BDAC) was created? What were the first steps of the process?
- What is the role of the Council Birmingham And District Allotments Confederation?
- Do associations of allotment gardens have its own internal regulations? Do they always support in the existing regulation of Birmingham city council or BDAC?
- Does the Birmingham City Council or BDAC make regular visits to local associations to check if the regulations are followed and everything works properly? How do you make sure all rules are followed?
- Are there any penalties for those who don't comply with the rules?
- Do allotments associations have to pay any kind of annual fee to the BDAC? What is the purpose of this fee?
- What would you say to someone who wants to start an Allotment Gardens association? What are the main steps to follow? Who to contact, etc?
- Is Birmingham BDAC liaising the responsibility of other places for growing food, such as CG, with other associations or institutions?