

# Lea Valley Growers Association

Lea Valley Specialist Glasshouse Branch  
of the National Farmers Union



***Established 1911, Supporting Growers for over 100 Years***

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17<sup>th</sup> September 2012

## Response to Local Plan 2012 Issues & Options The Future of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry

Established in 1911, today the Lea Valley Growers Association represents over 100 members and 95% of protected Horticultural growers in the Lea Valley.

The Lea Valley is the UK's largest Cucumber producer accounting for 80 Million sticks per annum representing up to 75% of the UK's total Production and 70 Million Sweet Peppers representing over 50% of the UK's total production.

The Lea Valley today and historically is a vibrant area of Protected Horticultural production, producing food entirely for the UK market to arguably the highest food safety standards in the world.

The Lea Valley Growers also produce edible crops such as Tomatoes, Aubergines, Lettuce, Baby Leaf Salads & Herbs as well as ornamental crops such as Bedding Plants, Trees, Shrubs & Flowers.

Members of the Association grow edible and ornamental produce under approximately 300 acres of glass, half of which falls within the Epping Forest District.

Agriculture and horticulture employment is 2,700 FTE jobs (4.84% of total employment in the Epping Forest District)

Defra's Food 2030 report sets out the Government's vision for a sustainable and secure food system for 2030.

The strategy is structured around six core issues for the food system, four of which are clearly supported by proposals in the Lea Valley:

- Ensuring a resilient, profitable and competitive food system
- Increasing food production sustainability
- Reducing the food system's greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing, reusing and reprocessing waste

In 2009 the Lea Valley Growers Association were named as stakeholders by the London Assembly for their consultation into the promotion of Commercial Food Growing in London.

The planning and housing committee conducted a review of the role of the planning system in supporting horticulture in London, with a particular focus on commercial food growing.

The aim was to assess how effectively the planning system supports and encourages food growing in London and calls for changes to the planning system to exploit the capital's potential to become more self sufficient.

As a result the following recommendations were made.

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Mayor should include in the London Plan reference to Green Belt Policy (PPG2). To better support the objectives of the London Food Strategy, Draft policy 7.16 (Green Belt) should specifically state that food growing is one of the most beneficial land uses in the Green Belt. Draft policy 7.16 should also include a requirement for boroughs to give added weight to food growing as one of the most productive activities in the Green Belt when preparing policies for their Local Development Frameworks.

#### **Recommendation 7**

The Mayor should commission an assessment of sites owned by the GLA group regarding their potential for short or long term urban horticulture for commercial growing opportunities in the next two years. Boroughs should do the same for Council owned land as well as existing brownfield sites through the LDF process.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Mayor should add to policy 7.22 under "LDF Preparation" that Food Growing is one of the most productive land uses in the Green Belt and is relevant to Outer London Boroughs.

#### **The Association recommends the following on behalf of its members:-**

- Removal of existing E13 Designated areas and replacement with a Criteria Based policy
- Permission for New Glasshouses of around 7 metres tall
- Permission for Affordable Workers Accommodation
- Permission for Renewable energy installations
- Less weight attributed to objections from the LVRPA, Amendment of the LVRPA Act 1966
- The Glasshouse report states that glasshouses should be recognised and accepted as part of the distinctive landscape character of the area, following existence in the Lea Valley for over a century
- The Strategic Land Availability Assessment May 2012 commissioned by the Council states 11.6 C iii, Regional Park was identified to be blighting commercial business growth, through opposition to uses that do not conform with their aspirations/policies, including expansion to glasshouse businesses.
- More weight given to economic growth as stated in the National Planning Policy Framework
- Permission for alternative uses for unviable sites

# 1. Permit larger taller glasshouses within designated areas to continue to support high technology food production.

The LVGA considers that glasshouses of around 7m tall are now an essential requirement for a modern, competitive commercial nursery and the new Local Plan's policies should support such proposals.

The Council, to its credit, has already granted planning permission for a number of tall glasshouses of around this size, including at Low Hill Nursery at Sedge Green; Tomworld at Shottentons Farm, Pecks Hill; and Netherhall Nursery at Netherhall Road.

The Council's Glasshouse report compares the Lea Valley with one of its major competitors in Kent (Thanet Earth) and comments as follows:-

The glasshouses are 7.28 metres tall, use recycled water, have thermal and light screens and use artificial lighting which allows an all year round growing season.

This compares to a typical Lea Valley glasshouse which will have a 22 week growing season i.e. peppers and cucumbers have a 67% longer growing season and tomatoes have a 136% longer growing season compared to the Lea Valley.

The intention is that the site will be able to produce 15% of the UK salad crop production.

The highly efficient system and longer growing season mean that Thanet Earth will have a higher output per m<sup>2</sup> compared to the Lea Valley.

It is understood that Thanet Earth potentially yields up to 100% higher than the average Lea Valley grower and 20 – 40% higher than the best growers in the Lea Valley.

The use of artificial lights and light screens allows the season to start earlier and end later when other glasshouse production would have ended.

It is understood that the light screens mean that light pollution is very low with less than 5% in the local area (although this area is much less populated than most of the Lea Valley).

The artificial light means crops can be planted earlier, start producing earlier and the season is extended. In the Lea Valley the growing season is typically 22 weeks compared to 37 – 52 weeks at Thanet Earth.

Taller glasshouses lead to increased production for a number of reasons: -

- When plants are grown on the glasshouse floor the plant roots are close to the cool ground which can harm the plants' growth. In taller glasshouses a hanging gutter system is used to raise the base of the plants to around waist level.
- This enables the air to circulate around and below the plant so that the temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide concentration are consistent throughout the glasshouse. The hanging gutter system also creates a much healthier working environment, so that workers do not have to bend to the floor to pick tomatoes or to tend to the plants. Because the plant base is about 70 to 80cms above the glasshouse floor, there is a need for additional glasshouse height.

- Sufficient height is required to give the plant space to grow and to achieve its maximum potential and new crop varieties grow taller and create better quality fruits.
- Modern glasshouses require one or more thermal screens attached to the trellis above the plants. This fulfills two functions: firstly in cooler weather it helps insulate the glasshouse to prevent heat escaping and therefore helps conserve energy; and secondly on very bright sunny days it helps to shade the plants to prevent overheating.
- A thermal screen is rolled out horizontally across the glasshouse, section by section, at around gutter level. If there is more than screen there will normally be a 90cm gap between them. It is important that a reasonable gap is maintained between the thermal screen and the top of the plants to encourage air circulation. Just as with the base of the plants, air circulation around the tops of the plants is essential in order to establish and maintain a consistent level of temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide throughout the glasshouse environment.

## 2. Consider expanding existing areas designated for glasshouses

It is essential that established nurseries, both within and outside the designated glasshouse areas, have scope for expansion, so that they can have an opportunity to expand their business and to increase their economies of scale to improve their productivity.

For some nurseries there is no realistic hope of expansion due to insurmountable site constraints, but for other nurseries expansion of their existing nursery is the best and most economical solution to expansion.

The Association considers the existing E13 policy to be outdated and is having a significant adverse effect on the growth and future viability of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry.

The Association presumes that Epping Forest District council planning officers and councilors share this view as the policy is not being followed.

The Association is aligned with other UK Growers Associations such as the West Sussex Growers Association in preferring a criteria based policy.

The proposed criteria should include:-

- Land adjacent to existing nurseries
- Where there is no significant impact on residential amenities or on historic assets that have statutory protection
- Land away from existing nurseries with the following benefits
- Land with appropriate Transport access
- Vehicular access from the site to the strategic road network is adequate and uses roads capable of accommodating the vehicle movements likely to be generated by the development without detriment to highway safety or residential amenity
- Land within an economic distance of a mains Gas pipeline
- Land which would be granted permission for renewable energy generation
- Land which could provide affordable workers accommodation/housing

This will allow the minority of growers (Less than 10%) who wish to expand the opportunity of doing so either immediately adjacent to their existing nurseries or on larger pieces of suitable land elsewhere in the district.

The council's current approach of designating large areas of unsuitable & Financially unviable land for future growth potential (Such as CWS Nursery, Hoe Lane & Parklands, Waltham Abbey) only serves to increase the value of that land and therefore renders it un-economic for horticultural use.

The councils E13B policy – Protection of Glasshouse areas, states that the council will refuse any application that it considers likely to harm the future vitality and/or viability of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry.

10.104L states that where appropriate in implementing the above policies, the council will consult the Lea Valley Growers Association and seek other expert advice.

The Council quite clearly are failing to follow their own E13 policy as the Association have obtained a response to a freedom of information request (IR01067) (Appendix B) which confirms that the Council have only consulted the Association once in the last 10 years (EPF/0166/11).

Two notable applications have been granted for non Horticultural use on designated horticultural land in the district in Hoe Lane, Nazeing (EPF/1907/10) where members approved an application for a Care Home on E13 designated land next to an existing Glasshouse Nursery that now has to find alternative revenue streams or face closure.

Secondly in Pick Hill, Horticultural land has been approved for house building which again restricts the opportunity for existing nurseries to expand.

The LVGA believes there is scope for expansion of the following glasshouse areas: -

- Old House Lane: north, east and south of existing designated area. (SR-001)
- Roydon Hamlet: north of Villa Nursery, north of Highlands Nursery.
- Tylers Cross Nursery: west and south of existing designated area.
- Tower Nursery: north of existing nursery complex. (SR-0008)
- Paynes Lane: south and west of Valley Grown Nurseries.
- Villa Nursery, Reeves Lane (SR-0094, SR-0095, SR-0096)
- Shottentons Farm, Pick Hill

### **3. Designate new sites for glasshouse development, not restricted to the Lea Valley.**

The LVGA wishes all its members to be able to expand their nursery business, should they wish to do so.

For several growers the best prospects for expansion are adjacent to their existing nursery.

For example at Valley Grown Nurseries in Paynes Lane, Nazeing the owner has made substantial investment in his existing nursery at the site and the expansion on to the adjoining land, either to the south or to the west or both, would bring considerable economies of scale and would be preferable to developing on a new site elsewhere, which would have considerable startup costs.

Similarly at Tower Nursery, Netherhall Road, Roydon there is scope for considerable enlargement of one of the existing nurseries business by expanding on to land to the north.

However some nurseries are effectively landlocked, either by other nurseries, other existing development, the steepness of adjoining land, or by the willingness of the adjoining owner to sell or dispose of the land. For these growers the only solution would be to designate one or more large sites elsewhere within the District to which they could either relocate or where they could develop an additional nursery.

The Councils Glasshouse report recommends a further 300 hectares of glasshouse development will be required over the next ten years.

The majority of this will be used by less than 10% of the growers.

New & Existing sites should make provision for Renewable energy generation and Affordable workers accommodation, both of which should be supported by the council.

The Strategic Land Availability Assessment May 2012 commissioned by the Council states 11.12 F, In Rural areas one of the attractions is to be away from employment areas and high streets.

Opportunities for Live/Work units and these were identified as the best opportunities for reuse of brown field land or redundant sites. Business/employment can detract from character in villages and housing presents opportunities to improve character in rural areas. Glasshouses remain a viable option in some rural areas.

Proposals to install modern energy and heat infrastructure, in the form of an anaerobic digestion plant & Combined Heat & Power, demonstrates a commitment by Lea Valley Growers to reducing energy use and recognition of the environmental benefits, in particular reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, associated with this kind of technology.

This kind of proactive approach will contribute to the UK cutting its GHG emissions by 80% within the next forty years, as required under the 2008 Climate Change Act.

"Since 2007, the Association has supported the NFU in leading the joint agricultural Climate Change Task Force in recognising the many opportunities for agriculture and land management to tackle climate change, and in developing a Greenhouse Gas Action Plan for our sector.

Robust responses have been submitted to government consultations on its Renewable Energy Strategy and incentive schemes for renewable electricity and heat.

A substantial low-carbon contribution is expected from the many forms of bio-energy, much of which can be supplied from within the Horticultural & agricultural sector.

It is the Associations and the NFU's stated aspiration that all farmers and growers should have the opportunity to diversify their businesses and create 'green' jobs by supplying renewable energy services. Farmers have always produced both food and non-food outputs, and we do not see any conflict between our contribution towards both food security and energy security.

The NFU has been closely involved in the development of successive policies on anaerobic digestion (AD) and Combined Heat & Power (CHP).

We support the current Coalition Government aspiration for a 'huge increase' in energy from AD, and have played a prominent role in the development and delivery of the 2011 AD Strategy.

The NFU developed the ambition, shared with many other organisations, of deploying 1000 farm-based anaerobic digesters by 2020, delivering multiple environmental benefits including low-carbon energy, abatement of greenhouse gas emissions and stimulation of good nutrient recycling.

The LVGA believes that Epping Forest District should take responsibility for meeting the expansion requirements of the nurseries within its area because:-

- The horticultural industry makes a valuable contribution to the local economy and has the potential to make an even greater contribution.
- The growers and their families have strong social and community ties within the District.
- There are a significant number of support services locally which could be detrimentally affected.
- The provision of land for glasshouses would not be on the policy agenda of any neighbouring local authorities and if EFDC did not allocate sufficient land for expansion no other local planning authority would be likely to step into the breach.

A comprehensive search is required to identify land suitable and available for glasshouse development away from existing designated areas but within Epping Forest District. Possible areas of search include: land close to J26 of the M25; north and south of the A121 near Waltham Abbey; at North Weald Airfield; and elsewhere in the North Weald/Hastingwood area, close to J8 of the M11.

It is important that any such search looks rationally and logically at the whole District, and takes into account land ownerships constraints (unless the Council expresses a positive intention to use compulsory purchase powers to assemble suitable land).

#### **4. Create policy “buffer zones” between new designated glasshouse areas and existing residential areas, so that taller glasshouses can be built without adversely affecting the light and visual amenity of nearby residents.**

The designation of land as being within a glasshouse area does not automatically mean that tall glasshouses could be built right up to the boundary of the area.

Even now, when planning applications are made for the construction of glasshouses within glasshouse areas development control officers give careful consideration to the visual impact of the development on the amenities of local residents and the possible effect of overshadowing or loss of light.

The LVGA does not therefore believe it is necessary to create “buffer zones” as described, as the issues arising from the development of tall glasshouses would be tackled as part of the normal development control process.

#### **5. Encourage the County Council to prepare a Freight Management Strategy to include the Nazeing and Roydon Areas.**

The LVGA believes that the local horticultural industry often unfairly gets the blame for heavy traffic on local roads, much of which is generated by other non-horticultural businesses operating in the area; and businesses from outside the area using local roads as a rat run to avoid congestion elsewhere (especially on the M11/M25).

Nevertheless the LVGA would positively engage in any attempt by the relevant authorities to improve the freight transport arrangements in the area. The solutions could include:

- better signage to ensure that drivers not familiar with the area are properly directed to the nursery they wish to visit;
- a commitment by growers to avoid certain unsuitable roads where an alternative is available;
- Road improvements
- Potentially in some areas, controls to prevent certain types of vehicle movement outside designated times.

#### **6. Introduce a policy of managed decline for the industry.**

The LVGA does not believe that “managed decline” would be seriously proposed by the Council. This would result in a significant increase in dereliction and would also result in a significant loss of employment and economic activity within the Lea Valley.

This would affect not only the nurseries themselves, but the businesses which support them - local plumbers, electricians, engineers and horticultural suppliers. It would also have a harmful effect on social and community cohesion.

## **7. Allow derelict sites to be developed for residential housing or other commercial uses, where it can be shown that the existing use is not financially viable.**

The LVGA is optimistic about the future of the local horticultural industry, but for businesses to succeed they require a reasonably successful base from which to expand, and suitable land for expansion.

There are several examples of nurseries which do not have either of these. They are usually already in a poor condition, on a relatively small site with out of date glasshouses and facilities, and often landlocked due to adjoining land either being unsuitable or unavailable for expansion.

It is unreasonable to expect these businesses to invest to improve their existing site, without the prospect of being able to create a nursery of a viable size. It is highly unlikely that such sites could attract outside investment. In these cases the LVGA believes that, in order to deal with the problem of present or eventual dereliction, the Council should designate such nurseries for new residential or commercial development.

There is a recent precedent for this approach. In the West Cheshunt area of Broxbourne Borough extensive nursery dereliction in the 1980s led to large swathes of nurseries being designated for residential development. On sites less well-related to the built up area Broxbourne Council adopted a policy of permitting low density development, at around 4/5 dwellings per acre, to preserve the character and appearance of the area.

The LVGA considers the following sites to be derelict, or approaching dereliction, with no reasonable prospect of expansion and therefore suitable for allocation for alternative use: -

- Sewardstone Nursery, Sewardstone Road (SR-0084)
- Mott Street Nursery, Sewardstone Road (SR-0236)
- Sedgigate Nursery, Sedge Green (SR-0010)
- Leaside Nursery, Sedge Green (SR-0246)
- Northfield Nursery, Sewardstone Road (SR-0337)
- Hannah Nursery, Sewardstone Road (SR-0337)

The Association proposes that the council adopt the following criteria to establish whether a Nursery will be economically viable during the period of the Local plan.

- Nurseries located in areas without:-
- Reasonable prospects of Expansion from adjacent land
- Reasonable prospects of obtaining investment
- Viable prospects of connecting to Mains gas or installing renewable energy
- Consent for expansion or diversification from the LVRPA
- Suitable transport access for Heavy Goods Vehicles

## **8. Co-operate with adjoining authorities to investigate the options for identifying new sites for glasshouse development**

As stated above in response to option 3, the LVGA believes that Epping Forest District should take responsibility for meeting the expansion requirements of the nurseries within its area because:-

- The horticultural industry makes a valuable contribution to the local economy and has the potential to make an even greater contribution.
- The growers and their families have strong social and community ties within the District.
- There are a significant number of support services locally which would be detrimentally affected.
- The provision of land for glasshouses would not be on the policy agenda of any neighbouring local authorities and if EFDC did not allocate sufficient land for expansion they would effectively be washing their hands of the issue.

Notwithstanding the above, with the present lack of any regional co-ordination of planning policies, it is difficult to see how horticultural development could effectively be planned for at a regional or even sub-regional level.

## **9. Engage with the LVRPA to discuss an agreed approach to continued glasshouse development in the Lea Valley.**

The LVGA recognises that the LVRPA has achieved much in the last 45 years in developing and improving the Park as an area for leisure and recreation.

However the Park is home to more than leisure and recreational uses and a wide range of other activities and interests compete for space.

The formation of the park in 1966 has significantly reduced the acreage of glasshouses in the Lea Valley from 727 to 150 (appendix d).

The parks strategy of buying nursery land on the pretence of finding suitable alternatives for displaced growers has worked to their advantage, however, the culture of obstruction and unwillingness to engage with growers has resulted in nearly an 80% loss of glasshouse area in this period.

The Parks strategy of buying land adjacent to existing Glasshouse nurseries has resulted in the strangulation of those businesses, dereliction and alternative uses.

Appendix (C) shows examples of park land surrounding existing nurseries where no activity or access takes place, yet the park refuse to discuss its sale to adjoining nurseries to assist their viability.

The LVRPA's own strategic aims, as set out in the 2010 Park Development Framework include the following:

"The Park is home to many different activities that support modern urban life: drinking water supply, disposal of waste, production of food and energy, sand and gravel extraction, flood water storage, electricity pylons, waterways, roads, and railways.

"We want a Park that can provide and accommodate these important functions, while allowing people to use and enjoy the facilities on offer, supporting wildlife, and contributing to a sustainable future for all."

There is a strong case for existing nurseries being permitted to remain and expand within the statutory boundaries of the Lee Valley Park: -

- Market gardening and horticulture have been concentrated in the upper Lee Valley since they were displaced from the lower Lee Valley by industrial expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- The horticultural industry makes a significant contribution to the local economy and community of the area and there is a shortage of potential sites suitable and available outside the Park's statutory boundaries.
- The Lee Valley Park contains some of the flattest land, most suitable to modern glasshouse development.
- With sensitive design and good quality landscaping there is no reason why high quality modern glasshouse development cannot be accommodated in the Lea Valley as productive landscapes are essential and suitable in the green belt.
- As an integral part of the Lea Valley's history, there is a strong case for the educational value of the local glasshouse industry to be recognized and planned for within the Park alongside new horticultural development.
- Although the LVRPA has a duty to develop the Park as a place for leisure and recreation, this does not preclude or override the District Council's right to meet the development needs of the local horticultural industry at least partly in the Lee Valley and to designate appropriate sites for this purpose.
- There are precedents for horticultural and other "non-Park" development being permitted by the Secretary of State within the Park's boundaries, e.g. an extension on to open farmland permitted on appeal at Tower Nursery, Netherhall Road, Roydon; and the residential development of the former military sites north and south of Waltham Abbey. Therefore the Park cannot be treated as being unsuitable, in principle, for nursery expansion.

Therefore the LVGA considers that the Council should designate suitable sites within or adjacent to the Lea Valley Park for the expansion of existing viable nurseries.

The sites considered by the LVGA to be most suitable for designation within or adjacent to the Park area: -

- Land North of Tower Nursery and east of Netherhall Road, Roydon, CM19 5JP (SR-0008)
- Land South and West of Valley Grown Nurseries, Paynes Lane, Nazeing
- Land Adjacent to Stubbins Hall Lane.
- Land adjacent to Nursery Road, EN9 2JF
- Land Adjacent to Dobbs Weir Road, CM19 5JX
- Land adjacent to Nazeing Road, EN9 2JL

On the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012, a delegation of growers from the Lea Valley Growers Association attended a meeting at Myddleton House with officers from the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to discuss specific proposals for Land purchase, letting or exchange.

The officers refused to discuss the specific sites that are land banked by the Lee Valley park and therefore are restricting the growers economic viability, furthermore they declared that the authority would not be prepared to discuss any options with growers.

The LVRPA Act 1966, 21 (1) states that the authority may Sell, Exchange or let land which is not required for the purposes of its functions. The specific sites above fall within this definition.

Indeed the site in Netherhall road falls within 18 (1) as specifically designated land by the authority to cater for the displacement of growers from other parts of the Lea Valley.

The Glasshouse industry report states that the Lee Valley Regional Park Plan part two, section 2 and especially **Section 3 – Broxbourne to Waltham Abbey** notes that the two concentrations of glass and industrial buildings (presumably packing facilities) have a visual impact on visitors, fragment the area and generate traffic.

The report makes the point that visitors create far more traffic than the glass sector. Furthermore, the current E13 policy should result in more concentrated areas.

The Glasshouse report states that glasshouses should be recognised and accepted as part of the distinctive landscape character of the area, following existence in the Lea Valley for over a century.

The Park objected to a Growers expansion plans (EPF/1181/11) on the basis of visual impact from another agricultural holding in the Park, seriously impacting on the growers future viability and the existing and potential of 200 local jobs.

The Park should be embarrassed that that they have objected to a development on an existing nursery site even though it borders the park on the basis of visual impact from a fellow agricultural holding.

The Strategic Land Availability Assessment May 2012 commissioned by the Council states 11.6 C iii, Regional Park was identified to be blighting commercial business growth, through opposition to uses that do not conform with their aspirations/policies, including expansion to glasshouse businesses.

The Park have recently sold a substantial area of land adjacent to their head office to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. A section 106 was used to satisfy the Secretary of state, however, the land is not available for unrestricted use by the general public and the use by a commercial business such as a football club does not fit within their remit.

The Association received the following response (Appendix A) from the LVRPA following its letter dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, which merely confirms the Authorities misinterpretation of its own act, the Councils glasshouse report and its unwillingness to engage.

The Lea Valley Growers Association is the Specialist Glasshouse branch of the National Farmers Union of England & Wales.

The Association will seek to amend the Act to include Food Production to safeguard the industry unless the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority engage with the industry and follow the recommendations of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry report that glasshouses should be recognised and accepted as part of the distinctive landscape character of the area, following existence in the Lea Valley for over a century.

## Conclusion

The Essex Rural Commission report 2009 recommended the launch of an Essex food policy that will set out, among other things, how local authorities and other public sector bodies can support local businesses.

The growing of Salad crops in the Lea Valley is aspiring for 70% self sufficiency in Water recycling, Heat & Co2 storage, energy efficiency and waste management.

The Lea Valley business model is based upon 6 Packhouse's marketing Lea Valley produce on behalf of growers directly to the main supermarkets.

Supermarkets demand fresh produce 365 days a year and therefore will not deal directly with individual growers whose season runs from February to October.

Supermarkets constantly demand increased volume and specialist varieties to keep pace with consumer demand and the price of fuel (Namely Gas) economically prohibits an extension to the English growing season over the winter months.

The reality is that unless these marketing companies/Packhouses are encouraged and allowed to expand, the supermarkets will place their orders elsewhere in the UK and abroad, which, will effectively lead to the demise of the whole of the Lea Valley Glasshouse industry, which, supplies the majority of the Capitals 36 hour supply of fresh produce.

Epping Forest District Council has for centuries enjoyed the advantage of a vibrant horticultural industry in its district providing employment & Economic growth.

This is now the time for the Council to demonstrate its commitment to the future of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry by shaping its planning policy to meet the current and future demands of the industry and ensure the industry continues to grow for the next century.

Yours sincerely

Gary Taylor

Gary Taylor (FI Hort, Miocd)  
**Chairman**  
**Lea Valley Growers Association**



Mr L Stiles  
Secretary  
Lea Valley Growers Association  
37-39 Turners Hill  
Cheshunt  
Herts  
EN8 8NP

5 September 2012

Dear Mr Stiles

**Lee Valley Growers Association Land Proposal**

Thank you for your email of 2 August 2012 in respect of the above. I apologise for the delay in responding.

As you are aware, the Authority's statutory purpose is defined in the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 (the Act) which identifies the Park as a place for inter alia recreation, sport and leisure. It is acknowledged that there are several areas of glasshouses which are within the boundary of the Regional Park.

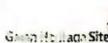
Under the Act the Authority can only dispose of the freehold of land when it is determined that it is no longer required for Park purposes. Any disposal of leasehold land must be for the statutory purpose and any disposal of leasehold land for more than 7 years requires consent from the Secretary of State.

I am aware that the glasshouse industry is undergoing structural change with the drive to large units to allow more economic production based on economies of scale.

You may be aware that in June 2012 Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) finalised the 'Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry Report' which researched the current state of the glasshouse sector, identified likely trends over the period to 2031 and future requirements of the Lea Valley glasshouse sector. This report forms part of the evidence base for their Local Plan. EFDC invited officers from this Authority to be involved in this project. Key recommendations from the EFDC report include:

- the glasshouse sector makes a significant contribution to the local economy and employment. However the current position of support for the sector within the existing designated areas 'E13 designations', where these areas are insufficient to allow large scale expansion is not viable for the sector in the long term;

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority  
Myddelton House, Bulls Cross, Enfield, Middlesex EN2 9HG  
Telephone: 01992 717 711 Fax: 01992 719 937 [www.leevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.leevalleypark.org.uk)



Bringing you



- large scale expansion will require new designations of E13 areas. To reflect the traffic issues and the compatibility of the glass houses and the Regional Park, designations should be considered to the east of Epping;
- support for small to medium sized growers could be accommodated by expansion of the existing E13 designation outside the Park Authority boundary. Expansion of the existing E13 areas within the Park would be resisted;
- both growers and the Council should work closer together in developing new sites e.g., Thanet Earth is an example of what can be achieved through positive partnership.

Therefore as previously advised the Authority, guided by both the Act and recommendations from the Glasshouse Industry Report, is unable to consider disposal in this instance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Ashley', written over a faint horizontal line.

Derrick Ashley  
Chairman



**Freedom of Information – Response to Request**

**Reference No. IR01067**

Set out below are details of your request for information held by the Council under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Council's response.

- 
1. How many occasions in the last 10 years have the Council consulted the Lea Valley Growers Association on planning applications relating to existing or new Glasshouse/Horticultural Nursery developments and what percentage of total applications does this represent.
  2. How many occasions in the last 10 years have the Council consulted the Lea Valley Growers Association on planning applications relating to derelict glasshouse/Horticultural Nursery developments and what percentage of total applications does this represent.

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**One case in respect of EPF/0166/11 for Demolition of existing loading area canopy, erection of extensions to existing packing shed for use as cucumber grading room and refrigerated despatch area and construction of loading ramp at Tower Nursery, Netherhall Road, Roydon, Harlow, Essex CM19 5JP.**

**The Council's Planning Registration system cannot identify what percentage this represents of all such types of applications.**

**Appendix (c)**

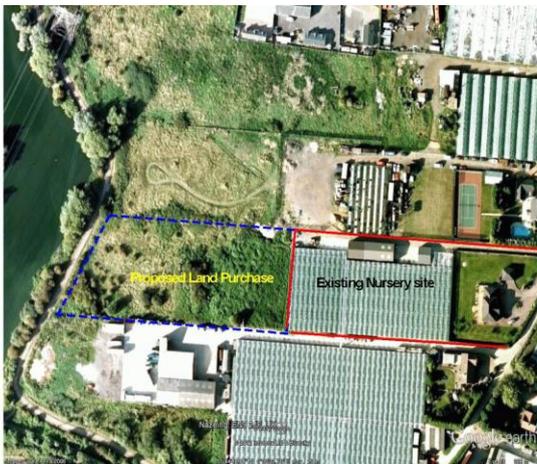
**Examples of Land surrounding existing Nurseries owned by the Lee Valley Park**

The attached maps show the piece of land in question which lies immediately adjacent to the UK Salads existing nursery in Netherhall Road.

The land measures approximately 111m x 378m (42,000 sqm/4ha)



This is pertaining to the land adjacent to the site at Hambling Nursery and extending to the lake at the rear of the property.



This is pertaining to the land between Meadowlea Nursery and Nazelow Nursery which covers approximately four acres.



This is pertaining to the land adjacent to the site at Hallmead Nursery and extending to the road at the front of the property.



**Appendix (d)**

**Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry Acreag & Crop types 1962 – 2012**

<b><u>1962</u></b>	<b>Acres Total 727</b>		<b><u>2012</u></b>	<b>Acres Total 150</b>
Tomatoes	200		Tomatoes	5
Carnations	100		Sweet Peppers	15
Chrysanthemums	27		Chrysanthemums	1
Cucumbers	300		Cucumbers	110
Roses	100		Bedding/House Plants	5
			Lettuce	5
			Aubergines	2
			Misc Aquatic/Carnivorous Garden centres, Herbs	7