



Concerned – from left to right, Julie Sumner, from Manor Gardens Allotment Society, Katy Andrews, chairwoman of the New Lammas Lands Defence Committee, and John Spears, chairman of the Waltham Forest Allotment Society

New site for allotment holders contaminated

ALLOTMENT holders who will be displaced by the 2012 Olympic Games have fears about the land they are to be moved to because the new site is covered in war rubble and asbestos – and nearby residents do not want them there.

Julie Sumner, of St John's Church Road, Homerton, is one of those who will have to give up an allotment in Manor Gardens, off Waterden Road, Hackney Wick, because the land is being bought by the London Development Agency (LDA) to make way for a foot-

by **SALLY SCOTT**

path within the Olympic park.

She has been told by the LDA that her plot and a further 80 others are to be moved later this year to land at Marsh Lane in Leyton.

However, concerned residents in the neighbouring borough of Waltham Forest are disputing the move because they say not only is the site on common land, owned by the public, but it is entirely unsuitable for growing anything because it is covered in rubble and asbestos.

"I know the LDA have done their job by finding replace-

ment land, but we are increasingly unhappy with this new site proposed because people don't want us there and there's even been talk of a petition to stop the move," said Julie.

"Not only are we thinking in gardening terms, but we are told it's also a designated anti-social area with a high crime rate and we don't want to be worried about parking our cars there, or having our sheds broken into."

John Spears, chairman of Waltham Forest's allotments holders, who are based near the Marsh Lane site, said: "I have every sympathy for the Hackney allotment holders who

have to move. They are being led up the garden path by the LDA over this new site.

"Allotments are used for growing food and they won't be able to that on this site because as far as I know the land is contaminated with asbestos, which would make it totally unsuitable for them."

Katy Andrews, of the New Lammas Land Defence Committee, also had concerns over the move.

"This land is held in trust by the council on the condition that people are free to roam there and to give the land to the allotment holders, especially from a different borough, would mean

this would just be lost," she said.

A spokeswoman for the LDA said the Marsh Lane site was still its preferred relocation site because it would enable the agency to provide the allotment holders with the same number of plots and equivalent facilities to those currently provided at Manor Gardens.

She added that the LDA would be undertaking the necessary health and safety checks to reveal the nature of the land and she hoped that the results would be submitted, to Waltham Forest Council, along with a planning application for the site, in the summer.