

# Olympic allotment rage

by **CARL BROWN**



**DISCUSSION:** Gareth Blacker (centre) from the London Development Agency meets plot holders and campaigners on the allotments in the pouring rain

(D6S58067)

GARDENERS who are being moved off their allotments to make way for the 2012 Olympic Games have spoken of their fury.

More than 80 plots on the 1.8 hectare Manor Gardens site, off Waterden Road, Stratford, will be bulldozed to make way for a concrete walkway on the Olympic site.

Most of the gardeners have had plots for decades and many of these have been handed down from their parents.

On Monday the London Development Agency (LDA) director of development for the Olympics, Gareth Blacker, met the gardeners to explain why the allotments will have to go.

The holders have been offered a site off Marsh Lane, Leyton, but this has not placated them.

Albert Dickinson, 79, has gardened his plot at Manor Gardens for more than 40 years.

Mr Dickinson said: "There is a community spirit down here, we all make an effort. If someone is on holiday we will help them out with the plot.

"And we are being forced to give all this up just for a fortnight's Olympic Games."

Mr Dickinson was not impressed by the Marsh Lane offer.

He said: "It is going to take longer to get there, the rent may be higher and the lots are smaller."

Peter O'Donnell, 68, has been at Manor Gardens for more than 30 years.

He said: "It is sick what they are going to do to the old boys here.

"This is a beautiful piece of land and they are taking people's livelihoods away from them."

A plan to save the allotments has been put together by the University of East London senior lecturer in architecture, Tak Hoshimo.

He said: "The plans I have seen would not pass an architecture exam these days. Pieces of interesting and highly effective land use such as this should form the basis for the design, not be deleted."

A spokesman for the LDA said the Manor Gardens site is in the middle of the planned Olympic site and cannot be kept.

He said: "The reason is that the ground level here will be lowered by up to six metres.

"In terms of health and safety it will be in the middle of the largest construction site in Europe; it is not the ideal location for growing plants."

The spokesman said the LDA will help the plot holders to relocate and will subsidise any difference in their rent.

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