

# **COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES ON HOMES FIRST MANAGED (HRA) COUNCIL LAND**

## **POLICY, GUIDANCE & APPLICATION FORM**

### **Contents:**

Introduction to the Guide	Page 2
Annex 1: Community Growing Checklist	Page 4
Annex 3: Community Growing Project - Application Form	Page 6
Annex 4: Community Engagement, Fundraising and Resources	Page 8
Annex 5: Process Summary	Page 10

# HOMES FIRST GUIDANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES

## Introduction

Homes First are keen to support community growing initiatives and this guidance aims to ensure applications are robust, well thought through and appropriate for any given site.

The importance of community food growing is recognised for its contribution to increased food security and helping communities lower their carbon footprint by producing locally grown food. Other benefits include increased health and wellbeing, giving residents access to a natural environment, and a healthy lifestyle, and creating a shared community space, that can increase the social capital of a neighbourhood or area.

Growing schemes should aim to engage fully with the local community and the views of neighbours and residents need to be considered when designing a project. We have provided tips and advice on how to conduct community engagement and have made suggestions on connections with other groups and services within the community - schemes should be inclusive to all.

A growing space can just be a simple area for flowers and wildlife which requires very little maintenance, a community orchard, or a space to grow food for or with local residents.

## Initial Enquiries

To discuss your proposal, the application process and to make sure the site can be taken forward to the pre-application stage. Please contact Green Consultancy [Greenconsultancypractice@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Greenconsultancypractice@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) who will be able to support you with this process.

## Application Check List

This list will help inform your application and is intended as to guide your organisation through the key issues of what is required.

The Green Consultancy Advisor will contact the following Teams and Services within the Council to ask for their feedback and comments on the proposal in principle:

- **Legal Team** – to ensure the land is owned by the Council, to search for restrictive covenants, maps, utilities searches and boundaries.
- **Green Consultancy** – That the project suitable for the site, the site is free from contamination or heritage issues, and to check for below ground service lines.
- **Neighbourhood Housing & Neighbourhood First** – to ensure the project suitable for the neighbourhood.
- **Property and Development Team** – to determine that the land is the land managed by the Housing Revenue Fund and not earmarked for another use.
- **Tenant Involvement Team** – To contact TOLD (Tenants of Lewes District) in Lewes or LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants) in Eastbourne to ensure that tenant representatives approve the proposal

Please be aware, if a major concern is identified, this will mean that the application process cannot continue.

## Application Form

Once you have got to the stage of having a yes to all pre-application items, you are ready to complete the full application form, a blank copy can be found at Annex 2.

Once completed please return the application form to [Greenconsultancypractice@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Greenconsultancypractice@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

When all necessary approval is gained from the list above, the application will go to PROSP Residential Asset Management Panel, for final approval and ratification.

Once this approval is given, and planning permission is not required, the Council will start to prepare the licence and legal documentation so you can occupy the site and start to develop the growing space.

If planning permission is required and is not granted, then you may need to adjust your community growing space idea.

### **Planning Permission**

If the applicant wishes to put any structures on the land Green Consultancy can facilitate communications with Planning. If planning permission is needed but not granted, the application will need to be adjusted or will not be able to proceed.

Please check *Annex 3: Community Engagement, Fundraising and Resources* which contains resources you might find useful.

### **Licensing Agreement and fees**

Once approval has been given for a growing space a licencing agreement will be drawn up which will include an appropriate rent agreement. For proposals showing excellent community engagement and benefit to our tenants and neighbourhood the rent will can be peppercorn.

If at any point the licence agreement is not being adhered to or if the use of the land is not as proposed in the application form the Council has the right to revoke the licence at time.

### **Annual Inspection**

The Council will arrange an annual inspection of the site once the lease has been completed.

## Annex 1

### HOMES FIRST COMMUNITY GROWING CHECKLIST

This checklist covers the key points that need to be confirmed before a full application is made.

The Green Consultancy Advisor will help your group with the first 12 checks. You are responsible for the remaining checks -please provide evidence for questions 13 – 22 where appropriate.

If you are planning to install any large structures, these are likely to require planning permission. The Council can support a growing space in principle after a growing spaces application has been submitted but will not be able to grant a licence for that growing space until planning permission is obtained.

Item	Yes	No	Comments / Information
Checks to be made with help from Green Consultancy Advisor:			
1. Is the land managed by Homes First?			
2. Is this land not earmarked for any other use?			
3. Is the land free of any restrictive covenants?			
4. Have Green Consultancy been consulted, and assessed the growing space and plans?			
5. Will the growing space avoid damaging nearby services e.g. drains, power lines etc?			
6. Is the land not contaminated?			
7. Is the land free of any archaeological issues?			
8. Have Tenants Groups (TOLD or LET) given their approval?			
9. Do Neighbourhood Housing support this proposal?			
10. Is "Change of Use" needed from Planning? If yes, have this been granted?			
11. If you are installing large structures, has planning permission been granted?			
12. Has PROSP Residential Asset Management Panel given approval?			
Checks to be made by your group or organisation – please provide evidence of these:			
13. Do you have the support of the Ward Councillor?			
14. Do local residents' support the proposal, and have you provided evidence?			
15. Will the site have access to water? (e.g., mains water or water catchment plans if the site does not have water?)			
16. Do you have an organisation in place that can manage the space e.g. CIC, constituted group?			
17. Will you have volunteers that can support the management of the space?			
18. Can you raise funds to develop the space?			
19. Do you have Public Liability Insurance?			
20. A) Will the development be free of new buildings and structures? B) Is planning permission needed? C) Or has planning permission been granted?			
21. Will you adhere to the Councils pesticide policy and biodiversity strategy (see annex 4)?			

22. Can you provide and fund an exit strategy?			
--	--	--	--

## Annex 2

<b>HOMES FIRST Community Growing Project Application Form</b>	
<b>Applicant Details</b>	
Address of Land for Community Garden:	
Name of your Group / Organisation:	
Lead Applicants:	
Contact address:	
Contact phone / email:	
Please state the status of the group (constituted, CIC, small charity etc)	
Does your organisation have Statutory Policies and Risk Assessments?	
Do you have Public Liability Insurance up to £5M?	
Have you completed the checklist? If not please refer to the full guidance document.	
<b>Proposal</b>	
Please provide a description of your growing project (e.g., its purpose, aims, scope):	
Please attach a plan or drawing of your proposal.	
<b>Considerations</b>	
<b>Structures:</b> Do you wish to bring any structures to the site? (Please include, raised beds, sheds, water catchment, composting etc.	
<b>Planning Permission</b> Is planning permission needed & if so, has planning been granted?	
<b>Water:</b>	

Does the site have access to water? If not, what are your plans for water supply?	
<b><u>Volunteers and helpers:</u></b> Do you have enough help to develop, run and maintain the project?	
<b><u>Security:</u></b> Please outline your plans for security in relation to the site and any structures or equipment you will keep on site.	
<b><u>Public Access:</u></b> How often will your garden be open? How much time does your group intend to spend on site?	
<b><u>Exit Strategy:</u></b> What are your plans if you were unable to continue with the growing project? e.g. removal of structures, putting the site back OR succession planning.	
<b><u>Council Involvement:</u></b> Do you need help from the council? e.g., site clearance, boundary fences or gates etc. Or ongoing maintenance of the site e.g. grass mowing, tree pruning.	
<b>Funding</b>	
Please outline any funding / or information on how your project will be financially supported?	
<b>Local Community</b>	
<b><u>Ward Councillors:</u></b> Have you been in contact with	

your councillors? Are they supportive of your idea?	
<b><u>Tenant Representative Groups</u></b> Please include the feedback you received from TOLD (Lewes), LET (Eastbourne).	
<b><u>Neighbours and community:</u></b> Have you spoken to people in the area? Who have you talked with and what has their reaction been?	
<b>Community Engagement</b>	
How will you involve Homes First tenants in your project?	
How will ensure community access and participation?	
How will the community benefit from your project?	
Would you consider providing growing workshops and training for local residents?	

## Annex 3

### Community Engagement, Fundraising and Resources

#### Imbedding Community Engagement in your project

**A nonexclusive list of ideas and recommendations for engaging with the local community about your growing project:**

- Inviting local residents from the surrounding streets to the site for a picnic, cup of tea or small activity for an informal and friendly chat about your plans and idea. Invite your local councillors along.
- Check that if the land is already used by members of the community e.g., for kid's ball games– make sure you link with anyone already using the land, ensure your plans don't cause conflict, make sure that your project doesn't encroach on currently used spaces.
- Ask local people what they think about the ideas and if they would like to get involved.
- Retirement or care home residents may be like to get involved with the project.
- Contact schools and nurseries, local GP practice (Social Prescriber) to let them know about your project. Perhaps there is a scope to work together.
- Link with the council's Tenant Involvement team to engage council tenants in your project.
- Try to engage with young people in the neighbourhood, let them know what's going on and see if they would like to be involved.
- Link with foodbanks and community larders – to establish a connection in the case you have a food surplus.
- Link with your local Food Partnership (Lewes District or Eastbourne).
- Listen to the feedback you receive, if possible, include what the local community would like into your plans.
- Keep interested organisations and residents updated with news about your progress – perhaps a WhatsApp group, email updates or posters?
- Invite participation from the community.
- Think about what you want to share with or provide to the community.

#### Funding Tips

**Far from being a complete list, this list provides ideas of where to look for grants and funding opportunities:**

- Sign up to East Sussex Funding News: <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/funding/news>
- Funding advice and newsletter: [www.3va.org.uk](http://www.3va.org.uk)
- If you are a council tenant, contact the Tenant Involvement Team for information about TOLD or LET Funding: [tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)
- Crowdfund East Sussex: <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/funding/search-for-grants-and-funding/crowdfund-east-sussex>
- Big Lottery Funding Schemes: [Boost your cause's fundraising with Eastbourne Local Lottery - Eastbourne Local Lottery](#)
- Eastbourne Lottery: <https://www.eastbournelocalottery.co.uk/>
- Tesco Community Grants: <https://tescocommunitygrants.org.uk/>
- Morrisons Foundation: <https://www.morrisonsfoundation.com/grant-funding-request/>
- Asda Foundation: <https://www.asdafoundation.org/how-to-apply>



- Consider linking with other projects or groups with similar aims to apply for larger funding bids. Often groups in the same area get into competition with one another / try to avoid this.
- Tips for writing a funding bid: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/project-fundraising-tips/>
- For support with setting up your group or any governance issues contact 3VA: [www.3va.org.uk](http://www.3va.org.uk)

## Community Growing Guides and Resources

- Visit other community gardening projects, ask them for advice on what has worked well, what hasn't. This can save you time and avoid making mistakes. It can be inspiring and give you connections within the growing community.

There's a lot of information about setting up a community growing project – here's just a small selection. The more research you can do, the better prepared you will be.

- Common Cause (Lewes) Guide to setting up a community Allotment: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d495b8b09f9572538bf718/t/570cb312e707eb4ed21e6c7e/1460450082741/cc\\_allotmentguide\\_output.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d495b8b09f9572538bf718/t/570cb312e707eb4ed21e6c7e/1460450082741/cc_allotmentguide_output.pdf)
- Gardening in Action GIA (Seaford) – Growing Community Toolkit: [Home - The Growing Toolkit](#)
- Lewes District Food Partnership. Grow, Cook, Eat Network: [Grow Cook Eat Network - Lewes District Food Partnership](#)
- Eastbourne Food Partnership: [Community Growing Projects | Eastbourne Food Partnership](#)
- RHS: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening/resources/community-garden>
- Brighton Permaculture Trust: <https://brightonpermaculture.org.uk/>
- Lewes District Council Biodiversity Policy: [Lewes Biodiversity Strategy - Appendix 1](#)
- Eastbourne Borough Biodiversity Policy: [Eastbourne Biodiversity Strategy - for website.pdf](#)
- Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Councils Pesticide Policy: [Pesticide policy and pollinator strategy - Appendix 1.pdf](#)

## Annex 4.

### Process Summary:

Initial discussion with Green Consultancy Advisor.

- Is the group constituted?
- Does the group have insurance?
- Can the group raise funds?
- Is the proposal suitable for the site?



Checks made by legal team on land ownership, covenants and boundaries and by Property and Development Team on whether the land is earmarked for other use.



If land is not owned by Council process ends. If land is General Fund, enquiry is forwarded to Green Consultancy for consideration.

If HRA land. The outline proposal is sent to

- Neighbourhood Housing,
- TOLD /LET (via Tenant Involvement Team),
- Green Consultancy for design advice, heritage issues, land contamination, services and to assess any cost involved (e.g., tree work, fence repairs).



Annex 2 (Application form) completed with support from the staff member. This will include a thorough Community consultation. See Annex 3 for suggestions & signposting.



Completed application form is checked and sent to all relevant teams and for approval. Checklist (Annex 2) is completed.



If planning permission is required, Advisor will facilitate this for the group. There may be a cost involved.



Once permission given or if not required, the Advisor will take the proposal to PROSP Residential Asset Management Panel for final approval. Once granted the Advisor will contact legal to write the Head of Terms and prepare the Licence to be signed.



Community Garden project may begin.



Ensure Annual inspection is completed.

