

COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) LAND

GUIDANCE & APPLICATION FORM

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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, 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: Jo.wunsch@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk / 01323 415120 who will be able to support you with this process.

The basic site checks will establish:

- If the land is Council land and if this managed by Homes First.
- If the land being earmarked for any other use.
- If the land suitable for growing what you have suggested.
- Housing, Open Spaces and Tenant Representation Groups (TOLD in Lewes District and Residents Voice in Eastbourne) are consulted.
- If there any restrictive covenants on the land.

Application Check List A

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

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 3.

Once completed please return the application form to jo.wunsch@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

If the checks, approvals, and criteria (Annex 2: Checklist B) are met, the Head of Homes First will review the application and will give final approval or raise additional questions.

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.

If you need advice on what an appropriate garden scheme is, please contact chris.bibb@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk. Please note that only general advice can be given, and the Council does not have the resources to carry out a detailed planting scheme.

Please check *Annex 4: Community Engagement, Fundraising and Resources* which contains resources you you might find useful.

Licencing Agreement and fees

Once approval has been given for a growing space a licencing agreement will be drawn up which will include a peppercorn rent.

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.

Annex 1

HOMES FIRST COMMUNITY GROWING CHECKLIST A (for applicants)

Following the initial enquiry, the basic site checks will have already established:

- If the land is Council land and if this managed by Homes First.
- Is the land being earmarked for any other use?
- Is the land suitable for growing what you have proposed?
- Neighbourhood Housing have been consulted.
- Legal have been consulted regarding land use and covenants.
- TOLD or Residents Voice have given their approval.

This checklist is for the organisation setting up the growing space and it covers the key areas that need to be thought about before a full application is made.

You should aim to answer yes to these questions – many will already have been addressed in your initial enquiry. If you need help answering these, you can apply to the Council to make these checks.

For item 14, 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	Comment
1. Is the land free of any restrictive covenants?			
2. Is the land free of any archaeological issues?			
3. Is this outside a conservation area?			
4. Is this land not earmarked for any other use?			
5. Will the growing space avoid damaging nearby services e.g. drains.			
6. Do you have the support of Neighbourhood Housing?			
7. Do you have the support of the Ward Councillor?			
8. Will this have the support of local residents groups?			
9. Will the site have access to water?			
10. Will you have an organisation in place that can manage the space?			
11. Will you have volunteers that can support the management of the space?			
12. Can raise funds to help develop the space?			
13. Do you have Public Liability Insurance?			
14. A) Will the development be free of new buildings and structures? B) Is planning permission needed? C) Or has planning permission been granted?			
15. Will you adhere to the Councils pesticide policy and biodiversity strategy?			

Annex 2

HOMES FIRST COMMUNITY GROWING CHECKLIST B (for Council use only)

This checklist will be use by the Council to help determine your application, the questions relating to these items are covered in the application form and pre-check process.

Item	Yes	No
1. Is there a organisation or structure in place to manage the space		
2. Is there a constitution in place?		
3. Is there evidence Public Liability Insurance of £5m?		
4. Have plans been submitted?		
5. Have all questions been answered?		
6. Is the land, actually Council land?		
7. Is the land free of any restrictive covenants?		
8. Is the land free of any archaeological issues?		
9. Is this outside a conservation area?		
10. Is this land not earmarked for any other use?		
11. Will the growing space avoid damaging nearby services e.g. drains.		
12. Is there evidence there is support from the Neighbourhood Housing?		
13. Is there evidence of support of the Ward Councillor?		
14. Is there evidence there is support of local residents?		
15. Will the site have access to water?		
16. Is there evidence of volunteers that can support the management of the space?		
17. Is there evidence that there are or will be sufficient funds to help develop the space?		
18. Does the group have Public Liability Insurance and essential policies in place?		
19. Is the planting scheme appropriate?		
20. Will the development be free of new buildings and structures?		
21. If buildings and structures are to be put in place, is there evidence that planning permission will be sought / is needed?		
22. Is there evidence of an exit strategy, if the growing space is no longer to continue?		

Annex 3

HOMES FIRST Community Growing Project Application Form	
Applicant Details	
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 checklist A? If not please refer to the full guidance document.	
Proposal	
Please provide a description of your growing project (e.g., its purpose, aims, scope):	
Please attach a plan or drawing of your proposal.	
Considerations	
Structures: Do you wish to bring any structures to the site? (Please include, raised beds, sheds, water catchment, composting etc.	
IS planning needed & if so, has planning been granted?	
Water:	

<p>Does the site have access to water? If not, what are your plans for water supply?</p>	
<p><u>Volunteers and helpers:</u> Do you have enough help to develop, run and maintain the project?</p>	
<p><u>Security:</u> Please outline your plans for security in relation to the site and any structures or equipment you will keep on site?</p>	
<p><u>Public Access:</u> How often will your garden be open? How much time does your group intend to spend on site?</p>	
<p><u>Exit Strategy:</u> 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.</p>	
<p><u>Council Involvement:</u> 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.</p>	
<p>Funding</p>	
<p>Please outline any funding / or information on how your project will be financially supported?</p>	
<p>Local Community</p>	
<p><u>Ward Councillors:</u> Have you been in contact with</p>	

your councillors? Are they supportive of your idea?	
<u>TOLD / Residents Voice</u> Please include the feedback you received from TOLD (Lewes), Residents Voice (Eastbourne).	
<u>Neighbours and community:</u> Have you spoken to people in the area? Who have you talked with and what has their reaction been?	
Community Engagement	
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 4

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 kids 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 and the Community Development & Sustainability Advisor 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
- If you are a council tenant, contact the Tenant Involvement Team for information about TOLD or Residents Voice Funding: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk
- Devolved Budgets. Information about these can be obtained from your local councillor.
- Crowdfund East Sussex: <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/funding/search-for-grants-and-funding/crowdfund-east-sussex>
- Community Grants Eastbourne: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/community/eastbourne-community-grants/>
- Community Grants Lewes District: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/community/lewes-district-community-grants/>
- Big Lottery Funding Schemes: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/>
- 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

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 Guide to setting up a community Allotment: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d495b8b09f9572538bf718/t/570cb312e707eb4ed21e6c7e/1460450082741/cc_allotmentguide_output.pdf
- Brighton and Hove Food Partnership guides: <https://bhfood.org.uk/category/how-to/grow-food/>
- Incredible Edible Todmorden resources: <https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/home>
- RHS: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening/resources/community-garden>
- Brighton Permaculture Trust: <https://brightonpermaculture.org.uk/>
- Social Farms and Gardens: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>
- Lewes District Council Biodiversity Policy: https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/_resources/assets/inline/full/0/312560.pdf
- Eastbourne Borough Biodiversity Policy: <https://democracy.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/documents/s20347/Eastbourne%20Biodiversity%20Strategy%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>
- Pesticide Policy <https://democracy.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/documents/s12084/Pesticide%20policy%20and%20pollinator%20strategy%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>