



BLETCHLEY & FENNY STRATFORD TOWN COUNCIL

PLOTHOLDER HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to allotment gardening with Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council. Allotments are great places for people of all ages to grow fruit and vegetables, keep fit, socialise with other people and enhance local biodiversity. We want to encourage as many people as possible to take up and enjoy allotment gardening.

The Town Council owns and directly manages four allotment sites* for Bletchley and Fenny Stratford residents to enjoy:

Larch Grove (24 plots)

Manor Fields (79 plots)

Orchardside (75 plots)

Newton Leys (82 plots including a community plot)

This handbook explains our tenancy agreement in plain English. The tenancy rules apply to all our tenants on these four sites. The rules are there to keep everyone safe and to ensure we are good neighbours to the people who live or work nearby. This handbook explains what you can and cannot do on your plot. It also explains how the allotment sites are managed and who to contact if you have any problems. Please read the handbook and keep it for future reference.



*The Town Council also owns one independently managed allotment site at Stoke Road and a Community Allotment at Pinewood Drive. This handbook does not apply to these sites.

ALLOTMENT SITES

MANOR FIELDS AND ORCHARDSIDE



ALLOTMENT SITES

LARCH GROVE

Larch Grove



NEWTON LEYS



Santa Maria Lane, Newton Leys

GETTING AN ALLOTMENT

WHO CAN HAVE AN ALLOTMENT?

Anyone over the age of 18 who lives in the parish of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford can apply for an allotment plot on one of our sites. Each site has a different character and differently sized plots. If you live in Newton Leys but outside the Town Council's boundary you can still apply for a plot at the Newton Leys site and you will be allocated a plot if there is capacity.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Contact Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council on 01908 649 469, email info@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk or download the form on our website. We will ask you to complete an application form with your contact details.

Once a plot becomes available, we can arrange for you to look at the site and ask any questions. If you decide to go ahead, you will need to:

- Complete and sign our application form with your current contact details
- Read the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement
- Sign the tenancy agreement to show that you agree to stick to the conditions
- Make payment for your plot

COST

The sizes of our allotment plots vary. Rent depends on the size of the plot. We calculate the rent for each plot based on the square metres within it. The rate per square metre is published on our website and it is the same for each site. You will be warned in advance of any planned changes in rent. Rent is payable annually and the allotment year runs from 1 October to 30 September. We do not accept cash or cheque payments and ask you to pay online using our website and the details we will provide to you. Please contact us if you have difficulty making payment.

If you take on a tenancy when there are less than 12 months of the allotment year remaining will only pay a proportion of the annual rent. We do not offer refunds if you leave your plot before the end of the tenancy year.

We do not charge a deposit to tenants but under the tenancy agreement the town council is legally entitled to charge you for any clearance costs if you leave your plot in a poor condition at the end of your tenancy.

The council tries to keep rents as low as possible so that allotment gardening is accessible to all. Our rental income does not cover the cost of maintaining the allotment sites.

Many of our terms and conditions are designed to help us keep the rents as low as possible so please be mindful of this.

MAXIMUM PLOT SIZE

A plot holder may have more than one allotment (subject to availability) as long as they are keeping all their plots in good condition. However, no individual plot holder may have more than 500m² of allotment land in total. (Please tell us if you want a particularly large or small plot.) We believe this is more than enough to provide food for an average family.

WAITING LISTS

When all our plots are occupied, Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council keeps a waiting list for those who are interested in renting a plot. When a plot becomes available it will be offered to the person who has been on the waiting list the longest.

If someone is only interested in one specific site, they must join the general waiting list and when they reach the top of the list they can decline a plot on any other site offered and remain at the top of the list until a plot becomes available on their desired site.

Existing tenants will only be offered further plots if there are no other people on the waiting list.

YOUR ALLOTMENT TENANCY AGREEMENT



Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract between Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council and you, the tenant, which lasts for up to a year. When you sign your agreement you are agreeing to rent a plot, to look after it and to abide by the conditions and rules explained in this handbook. If you do not stick to the rules the town council may terminate your agreement before the year is up. If everything is going well you can expect to have your tenancy renewed each year.

The ownership of the plot stays with Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council (and we have a right of access at all times) but you have the right to use the plot to grow fruit and vegetables and to decide who else can come onto your plot. You should not go onto anyone else's plot unless you are invited by the plot holder or there is an emergency such as a fire or accident.

If you break the rules in this handbook your tenancy may be terminated or may not be renewed at the end of the year. You will be given notice so that you can clear your plot of any personal belongings, make the site good and avoid any additional costs.

CARING FOR YOUR ALLOTMENT PLOT

Your most important responsibility as a tenant is to look after and maintain your plot. This means you must keep your plot cultivated and free from weeds. In this case cultivation means the growing of fruit, vegetables or flowers. You must also keep the plot safe and tidy by removing rubbish especially dangerous items such as glass, asbestos or barbed wire, or flammable materials such as petrol. Please remember that plotheolders have a duty of care to make sure their plot is safe for any people accessing the allotment site (eg other tenants, visitors, town council contractors or staff carrying out inspections). With this in mind you may wish to take out your own public liability insurance. This can be done cheaply through the National Allotment Association (details at the end of this handbook).

If you have a problem in maintaining your plot because of illness or any other reason, you still have the responsibility to make sure that it is kept cultivated. If you are struggling with maintenance, please contact the town council office. We understand that life can be difficult sometimes and we can discuss how you can avoid losing your allotment.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If you change address or contact details, it is your responsibility to tell us so that we can keep in touch and you will have the chance to renew your tenancy.

SUBLETTING/SHARING YOUR PLOT

A plot can only be let to one person and the tenancy agreement will be made out in the name of that person. It is strictly forbidden to sublet the plot. However, if you need help to cultivate your plot you are welcome to ask friends or family members to assist you. You will remain responsible for the behaviour of anyone who helps you in this way and if they break any of the terms and conditions of the tenancy you may lose your tenancy so please ensure they understand the rules.

SITE INSPECTIONS & NOTICE TO QUIT

You must ensure that 25% of your plot is in cultivation within 3 months of you taking up the tenancy. You then need to ensure that 75% of the plot is fully cultivated by the end of your first year and you must keep this up. In other words, 75% of the area must be planted up with crops. You must also keep your plot free from weeds and safe and tidy by removing rubbish. The plot must be kept free of hazards (eg broken glass and scrap metal). The allotments are regularly inspected by the town council to ensure that all allotments are being maintained. It is important that no activity on your plot affects the enjoyment and cultivation of other plots eg spread of weeds.

The town council does not want to serve notice to quit to any tenant and we will always try to negotiate to resolve any problems before taking this drastic step. However it is unfair on other tenants to allow any plots to become overgrown or misused. Please talk to us as soon as possible if you are having problems.

Following our inspections, the town council will notify any tenants who may be breaching any rules of the action which is expected from them to bring the plot to an acceptable condition and by when. If the tenant does not comply with the town council's requirements there may be a further warning and notice to quit may be given.

ALLOTMENT SITE OPENING HOURS

For safety reasons we ask you to only visit the site during daylight hours. In the summer months we recommend that tenants leave the site by 9:00 pm.



WHAT CAN YOU GROW?

You can grow vegetables, fruits and flowers for cutting. This includes soft fruit canes and bushes.

If you want to plant one small fruit tree you must get written permission from Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council first. Large trees are not permitted because they will cast shade over a wide area and take nutrients and water from neighbouring plots. Any trees planted should therefore be of a dwarf variety. It is your responsibility to ensure that trees are pruned and maintained so they do not become overgrown or cause nuisance to neighbouring plots. You may be required to remove trees planted without permission.



SHEDS, GREENHOUSES AND POLYTUNNELS

You cannot put built structures on your plot unless you have permission in writing from Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council. This includes new fences (which are not permitted) and very large compost structures. Only one shed and one poly-tunnel (or greenhouse) will be permitted per plot. If you want to erect any buildings or structures including a shed, greenhouse or poly-tunnel, please contact Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council first and do not begin construction until you have permission in writing. All structures must be safe and erected at your own risk.

Please bear in mind that the plot should not be overcrowded with structures because you must keep 75% of it in cultivation. If structures are erected without permission the Town Council may insist that they are removed and can recharge the cost of the removal if the tenant does not arrange this.

(You may see some plots with fences, numerous buildings etc. Mostly these were erected some time ago before our rules changed and have been allowed to remain until the tenants leave.)

	Newton Leys	All other sites
Sheds should not be larger than	6' x 4' (1.8m by 1.2m)	8' x 6' (2.4m by 1.8m)
Greenhouses (Perspex only) and poly-tunnels should not be larger than	8' x 6' (2.4m by 1.8m)	13' x 10' (4m by 3m)

FIRES AND RUBBISH DISPOSAL

Fire is a risk on all allotments. Bonfires and incinerators are prohibited except on weekday afternoons from 16.30 onwards and some Saturday mornings during the year between 10 am and 12 noon (weather permitting).



The permitted dates for Saturday fires will be provided annually by Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council. Please ensure that :

- You do not cause a nuisance with continuous and/or excessive smoke
- Only garden refuse is burnt -green allotment waste will produce unwelcome smoke
- You do not import materials from off site to burn at the allotments
- You do not start a fire on a windy day; damage caused by smoke or fire is the responsibility of the tenant
- You only light fires during daylight hours, and never leave a fire unattended
- If you leave an unattended fire on your plot you will lose your tenancy

Fireworks and firework parties are not permitted.

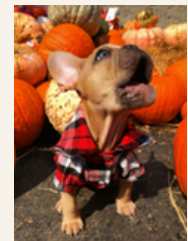
You must make your own arrangements to dispose of your rubbish. Green waste can be made into compost but your other waste must be removed from the site by you.

CHILDREN DOGS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

You may invite family and friends on to your plot for the purposes of helping you garden. You are responsible for their behaviour.

Your children are very welcome but must be properly supervised by an adult at all times not least because allotments include significant hazards such as water troughs. Children enjoy visiting allotments especially if they can help cultivate a small area themselves but large items of children's play equipment such as trampolines and climbing frames are not permitted.

Dogs are allowed on the allotment site but they must be kept on a lead and strictly on your own plot. Please ensure you clear up any dog poo. Please be mindful of other tenants' quiet enjoyment of the site.



KEEPING OF LIVESTOCK AND BEES

No livestock is permitted on the allotments, including chickens, and pigeons. Bees cannot be kept on an individual allotment plot. Where possible the Council may work with an experienced beekeeper to introduce bees.

Small patches of wildflowers, to attract pollinating insects and bees, are allowed. These must be properly maintained, so that they cannot become a nuisance to yourself or other tenants, with excessive growth and seeds/root growth.

BRINGING COMPOST/ MANURE ONTO THE SITE

Gardeners may bring green waste such as grass and hedge cuttings onto their own plot for making into compost for their own use. Manure may also be brought onto the site in appropriate quantities, provided it is stored and used appropriately. If taking delivery of manure, please ensure that you are on site to oversee the delivery and ensure that vehicles do not drive on neighbouring plots as this can cause damage to the plot and soil compaction.

Please remember that humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure (e-coli bacteria is especially prevalent in fresh manure) and always wear gloves when handling any type of manure.

USE OF CARPET, CARPET TILES, UNDERLAY AND POLYTHENE

The temporary use of polythene membrane to keep the weeds down is permitted as are biodegradable mulches such as bark. The use of carpet, carpet-tiles and underlay for weed control is prohibited.

RECYCLING



Many allotment gardeners make use of recycled materials for gardening purposes. The town council encourages you to be inventive and to re-use old materials but reminds tenants that all structures must be safe and secure. Please do not bring anything on to the site unless you have a specific use for it and the project will be completed within a short timeframe. Piles of recycled materials may be unstable, encourage rats and can get in the way of full cultivation of your plot. Please do not bring old car tyres onto site.

USE AND STORAGE OF CHEMICALS



We encourage eco-friendly, chemical free cultivation but if you must use chemicals including weed killer you must not affect any adjoining plots, hedges, trees etc.

Remember that chemicals may be flammable and please do not store petrol or other fuels on site. Fire is a real risk on our sites and people have had sheds burned down when vandals have discovered fuel within.

VERMIN (RATS)

Vermin infestation is a very serious threat to health, due to the numerous diseases which rats carry. Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council is very keen to keep the site free of vermin. Please be careful to avoid any practices which might encourage rats and mice.



Open composters are fine for grass cuttings and weeds but not for kitchen waste which should be put into a covered compost bin. Overgrown plots and piles of rubbish will also attract rats so it is important to keep your plot tidy.

If you see rats or any sign of infestation including burrows, tracks or droppings please inform Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council so that pest control can be called.

COMPOSTING

Composting is a cheap and easy way of providing your plot with an environmentally friendly garden conditioner. Rich in plant nutrients, compost is a crumbly, brown, soil-like material, which forms from the decomposition of organic matter. The addition of compost to your soil will improve its structure and increase the level of biological activity both of which are vital for plant growth. A reasonable sized compost structure is allowed.

Do compost: Fruit and vegetable peelings, grass cuttings, autumn leaves and annual weeds, tea bags/leaves and coffee grounds, soft pruning's and clippings, finely cut hedge clipping, hair and pet fur and pure wool.

Do not compost: Fat or bones, coal and ash, products soiled with oil, paper, metal, glass or plastic, nappies, meat, cooked vegetables, bread, cat/dog litter, sauce covered foods and woody material.

If you are using an open composter do not compost fruit and vegetables as these will attract vermin and attract flies in the warmer months. Please use a compost bin with a lid for fruits and vegetables.

WATER, HOSES AND PONDS

Where possible tenants are encouraged to collect rainwater in water butts, however, ponds are not allowed. The allotments are provided with either water troughs or taps, which are isolated and turned off during the winter.

Do not attach hoses to the taps, and ensure taps are turned off when not in use.

FENCES AND GATES



Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council is responsible for the maintenance of the main tracks (ie ridings), pathways, fences and gates. Tenants must use designated gates to the allotments only, and keep main tracks and pathways clear to enable our staff and contractors to have access to maintain the site at all times. Please be aware that our fences can only act as a deterrent. A determined intruder can always find a way into the site.

Do not leave rubbish or compost heaps against fencing and posts, as this can cause them to lean and/or rot but also cause nuisance to our neighbours.

You must not construct fences or barriers on your plot. The use of barbed wire is prohibited.

If you see a broken padlock, damaged fence, leaking water tap or any other maintenance problem on the site please report it to Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council as soon as possible so that repairs can be carried out promptly.

PLOT MARKERS AND BORDERS

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council will provide plot markers, which must be staked firmly in the front left-hand corner of the plot and must remain visible at all times. Please don't move them as this causes confusion for everyone and can lead to disputes.

Please ensure you keep the edge of plots trimmed up to the edge of the ridings so that grass cutting activities can be undertaken without damage to crops. Each plot holder is responsible for the maintenance/grass cutting of any pathway between plots which is to the left of their plot.

VEHICLES ON SITE

You may drive your vehicle on to the site in dry conditions if your site has appropriate access. Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council takes no responsibility for any damage caused to your vehicle whilst on the site.



Please:

- Stick to the tracks, and park in designated parking spaces
- Do not drive on grass ridings (wide grass paths) when the ground is wet. The ridings will be closed from 1st November - 31st March
- Drive slowly, bearing in mind that there may be children on site
- Do not use vacant plots for turning, or parking, as this compacts the soil
- Lock the gate behind you
- Keep your vehicle locked whether inside or outside the gates

SECURITY

You must ensure that the gates to the site are kept locked at all times in order to minimise theft and vandalism. Passcodes or keys will be provided to you by Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council. Please do not share these widely. You should notify Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council if gates and locks are damaged and report any suspicious activity to the police.

Theft of tools, equipment and crops is a sad fact of life on most allotment sites so do not store anything of great value to you on site and consider your insurance position. Apart from the emergency services the only people allowed on site are existing tenants and those helping them, town council contractors, officers and members and supervised delivery drivers.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF YOUR PLOT

Your allotment must be used to cultivate produce for your own personal consumption. Running a business or trading from an allotment garden is strictly prohibited. Your allotment plot is not an ornamental garden.

Other restrictions include:

- No large children's play equipment or large garden furniture
- Plots cannot be sublet nor can you "hand on" your plot to a friend or family member (You may have a private arrangement to share your plot with a helper(s) but all tenancies are single and the plot holder is responsible for the behaviour of anyone they invite on site to help them garden)
- No carpet, underlay, glass, asbestos or concrete on your plot
- No building materials, including shingle/gravel or slate, or other bulky items on site. A small quantity of pavers is allowed for shed bases and paths. Please bear in mind the tenant is responsible for returning the site to clear ground, at the end of tenancy
- No chainsaws
- No removal or selling of any soil, mineral, sand or clay from your plot without permission in writing from the town council

If you damage allotment structures, such as gates, fencing and water taps you should report this to the town council. The town council reserves the right to recover the cost of any repairs made necessary by tenant damage.

For further information please refer to the terms and conditions and tenancy agreement.

PERSONAL SAFETY AT THE ALLOTMENTS

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council aims to make its allotment sites as safe and secure an environment as possible. However, it is not possible to make an allotment site a “risk free zone” so please note the following safety advice:

- Keep your tetanus injections up to date
- Observe basic hygiene rules when handling manure, soil and chemicals
- Do not wash gardening tools directly in the water butts but be aware that someone might
- If you are gardening alone, please make sure that you tell someone where you are going and how long you expect to be and have a phone with you
- Report any hazards on the site to the town council as soon as possible
- Always store sharp tools and chemicals securely
- Supervise your children at all times and ensure they do not stray onto other people’s plots and do not play with the taps/water butts
- Report any crime or suspicious behaviour to the police, 101 for non-emergency and 999 for crimes in progress - please also keep Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council informed after contacting the police



SITE MANAGEMENT

RIGHTS OF ENTRY

Councillors, officers and others employed by Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council have the right to enter the allotment site to inspect and carry out work without notice. The allotment gardens are frequently inspected to ensure that all tenants are complying with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

MAINTENANCE

The town council's landscaping maintenance team undertake work in the allotments from time to time and occasionally third-party contractors are used.



DISPUTES

Tenants must not cause a nuisance or annoyance to other tenants. The town council will not tolerate bullying or harassment on the site including discrimination against other tenants because of protected characteristic. In the unlikely and unfortunate event of you having a disagreement or dispute with another tenant which cannot be resolved informally you should refer this to the town council.

COMPLAINTS, ENQUIRIES AND CONCERNS

Please raise any complaints, enquiries or concerns with the town council. We welcome constructive feedback whether negative or positive.

The town council does not have a site representative among the plot holders and we try to treat everyone in the same way. Please note that often we cannot share information about tenants with other tenants including for reasons of data protection.

If you do not receive a satisfactory response from us you may use the town council's formal complaints process. Details of this are on our website or can be obtained from our office at Sycamore House.

SECOND PLOT

An existing tenant can apply for a further plot if there is no one else on the waiting list. There is no maximum number of plots that can be held by any one tenant, but there is a combined maximum meterage a single tenant can hold. If you would like a further plot please contact the Council on info@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk

GIVING UP YOUR PLOT

If you decide to give up your plot, please notify Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council in writing. You will be asked to complete a termination form and we will tell you on which date the tenancy ends. We cannot refund any rent which has already been paid.

It is the tenant's responsibility to clear the plot when giving up the tenancy, leaving the land ready for the next tenant. You should remove all your property from the site. If the plot is left in an untidy state which means we need to clear it you may be charged for the costs of this work. This includes removal of rubbish and dismantling of unsafe structures.

Please give us as much notice as possible so that it can be offered to the next person on the waiting list and there is a smooth handover. The new plot holder will benefit from getting the plot in a good condition and being able to make a prompt start.

You cannot reapply for the plot, or another plot, for a minimum of three months. After that you may make further application which will be treated as a new application and added to the bottom of the relevant waiting list.

If you already have a plot and there is no waiting list, you may be able move to a new plot in certain circumstances. If you would like to move plots please contact us for more information.

OTHER SOURCES OF USEFUL INFORMATION/HELP

The National Allotment Society offers help and information about allotment gardening and associated issues. By becoming a member, you can enjoy the following benefits:

- Allotmenters Liability Insurance
- Initial legal advice
- Supportive regional network
- Discounted Allotment Association insurance
- Quarterly magazine
- Discounted quality seeds
- Gardening advice



<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

Please visit their website for more details.

TIPS FOR NEW TENANTS

1. Plan ahead. A well-planned plot is more likely to be successful. Good gardens don't just happen.
2. Decide what you want to grow. Grow what you, and your family enjoy eating.
3. Find out what your crops require with regard to soil type, sunlight or whether they require a greenhouse.
4. Do not be afraid to ask. As a rule, our allotment tenants are friendly and helpful, so ask the person who seems to have the best plot or the most successful ones. It is worth remembering that no two plots are necessarily the same.
5. Do not try to do too much at once. Do a bit at a time. A little done well will likely be more successful than a lot done hurriedly.
6. Be prepared to accept a failure. It happens to everyone.
7. Try to have the right tools for the job and look after them, as it will make life easier.
8. Stay safe on the allotment and look out for your fellow tenants.
9. Enjoy your plot. If you enjoy it, you will look after it. If you look after it, your chances of success are likely to be higher. If you allow your plot to become a chore, then you can almost guarantee to fail. Good luck and happy gardening!

IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS

BLETCHLEY AND FENNY STRATFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Sycamore House, Drayton Road, MK2 3RR

Telephone: 01908 649 469

Email: info@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk

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Our office is open to the public 9am to 1pm on Mondays and 9am to 4pm Tuesday to Friday. Please call in without an appointment to discuss any aspect of your allotment gardening or any other town council business.

Follow us on our socials:

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bfs.towncouncil/>

Instagram -

<https://www.instagram.com/bletchleyfennystratfordtc/>

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

If you need to report crime in progress at the allotments ring 999, for non-urgent problems ring 101.

ANGLIAN WATER

If you need to report a problem with water ring 08457 145145

BUCKS FIRE SERVICE

Always ring 999 if you need to report a problem with fire at the allotments.