



Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd
Est. 1943
Register № 12585

Allotment Rules

The Allotment Rules have been updated in September 2020 and reflects changes in the new Lease agreed with the Council (Document Ref: KS/6870). This document is based on the Lease, which will be made available to the Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd members following the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September 2020, the previous Rule Book, and rules discussed and agreed during previous AGMs.

The purpose of the document is to relate to plot-holders and members of the Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd the exact criteria by which the Allotments are leased to the Society, and by extension, by which criteria the Committee will make decisions on termination of membership to allotment holders.

Who's who

The land belongs to the Council who lease it to the Allotment society members, i.e. plot-holders, subject to satisfaction of specified criteria of land use. These are written in the Lease, an official legal document. The Committee – a group of volunteer Society members – exists as an intermediary between the two. The Committee deals with legal matters, maintains public liability insurance, collects and pays rent and utility bills, organises preventative maintenance and repairs, plans Society events, and enforces the rules when necessary. Failure to comply with the Lease risks dismantling of the Society and return of land to the Council. Although many (8 out of 22) allotment societies in Cambridge are managed by the Council, the pressure for land and proximity to a future building site (the football stadium), makes Whitehill particularly vulnerable to a “change of function”.

The two main points of the Lease

The Lease specifies the amount of Rent to be paid annually to the Council and the state and use of land expected from the Society. The easiest ways to lose our tenancy (or for individual plot-holders to lose their plots) are failure to pay the rent and failure to cultivate 80%+ of their plot.

Renting procedure

We hope that you stay with us for many productive and plentiful years. Communication is key to this. Outlined below is the ideal case situation:

1. New members should be given a 5-pole or starter plot. An alternative to this is nominally “splitting” a standard 10-pole plot between a member wanting to retire in the following year and a new member.
2. A larger plot can be asked for and existing members are guaranteed priority over the waiting list. A single holder would not be given more than a standard 10-pole plot from September 2020.
3. The calendar year starts on the 1st of October. The rent and a filled-in Registration Document are due yearly from the Saturday before (last Saturday of September) to the 14th of October.
4. Should the area be well-maintained, the Allotment Rules adhered to, and the rent paid, there is no reason why a plot-holder cannot continue for many years, and we boast many decade-long rentals.
5. Should the area be somewhat neglected but notice and explanation have been given to the Committee, the plot can be looked after for a maximum period of 3 months before the eviction process will start. Alternatively, a member may request a reduction of their rented area.
6. When neglect or abandonment is discovered during an inspection, with no prior contact between the plot-holder and the Committee, the eviction process will start and continue as described further in this document. The plot is also deemed vacant 6 weeks after failing to pay the rent.
7. A plot can be given up at any point, however, apart from the key deposit no further refunds will be given. The plot should be cleared by the 1st of October.

General

Joining the Society

Only members of the Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd can rent a plot. A new member's application needs to be approved by the Committee in writing. Every member joining the Society should familiarise themselves with these Allotment Rules. Under no circumstances can a plot, or a part of the plot, be let or sublet to non-members or another member without Committee's knowledge or a recorded transfer.

Each member of the Elfleda site will hold a key, with a £16 returnable deposit paid upfront. Each member of the Peverel site will be given a number combination for the lock, which will be changed annually on the 1st of October.

New members are given a maximum of 2 months to start cultivation of their plot. This is also a probationary period for a new member, with mentoring by one of the committee members if required.

Continuing with the Society

An existing plot-holder is given priority for renting the same plot over the years to follow, provided no unresolved issues have been raised with the Committee. The annual rent is due for payment at the Shop at the end of September.

A Registration Document highlighting the main points or changes to the Lease, as well as asking for current contact information, needs to be filled, signed and returned to the Committee with every annual rent payment. Current contact information will be held on all members of the Society under data protection law and will be updated annually.

The general management of the allotments is vested solely in the Committee. The Committee has the power to deal with any matters arising in the best interests of the Society, and members will be bound by their decision. Any member of the Society can apply to become a member of the Committee and will be appointed in accordance with the registered rules of the Society: apart from the Committee's "core" (Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer), once elected at an AGM, Committee members have a term of 4 years, unless no new volunteers appear. Ex-Committee members may re-join following a 1-year leave.

Communication

The Committee will contact all members of the Society with regular updates and events by email and printouts on the noticeboard. Please consider joining the Facebook page of the Society. The Committee can be contacted via email or in person during Shop opening hours. A member of the Society may raise a concern with the Committee at any point. A suggestion box is also located outside the Shop.

Extenuating circumstances

We understand that there may be reasons beyond your control for a lack of cultivation. We ask that you contact the Committee at the earliest convenience if a lengthy absence is expected and you would like to continue holding your plot. Arrangements will be made to maintain the area in your absence for a maximum of 3 months if a satisfactory explanation is given. Please note that downsizing is available at any point.

Power of the Lease

Due to new regulations outlined in the Lease, a member may find themselves or another member in breach of one or more clauses. The Committee has the power to allow exceptions or provide solutions, such as skip hire for rubbish, however, should the Council order or request specific actions to be taken, the Lease overrules all.

Leaving the Society

A member may decide to leave the Society at any point. The key should be returned to the Shop and exchanged for the £16 deposit. The plot should be left in a good condition ready for letting. There should not be any rubbish left on the plot. Please ensure removal of personal items, as any remaining tools are given to the next plot-holder.

Site and Facilities

The Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd has two sites in Cambridge CB5: Elfleda Road and Peverel Road. Both sites have mains-supplied water troughs. Elfleda Road also has the Society shop (which sells various gardening supplies), a bio-toilet, and a community orchard.

Right of entry

Only current members of the Society are allowed entry to the site. Non-members as well as any workmen acting on instruction are allowed on site only with continuous supervision by a member of the Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd. Exception to this are members of the Council, who may gain entry following a 48-hour notice period (except in an emergency, when no notice is required).

Any plot can be accessed only by the plot-holder or by their guest either in their presence or for watering/maintenance in the plot-holder's absence (with plot-holder's permission and request). The exception to this is when members of the Committee are conducting a regular inspection; they do not require permission of the plot-holder to enter. The paths between the plots are only for use of the adjacent allotment holders.

The gate securing each site must be kept locked (except during Shop opening hour on Elfleda Road). CCTV operates at the gate at all times.

It is the responsibility of every member of the Society to maintain security and order on site.

Cars

Cars are allowed on site only in their owner's and the plot-holder's presence. No car should be left parked on site overnight. Caravans or movable dwellings are not to be placed on the land. The land should not be used for sleeping or residential purposes.

Children

Children are allowed and welcome on site. They must be supervised at all times and remain at their parents'/guardians' plot.

Shop

The Shop located at the Elfleda Road Site of the Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd is open on Saturdays from 12.00 to 1.00 PM from February till late October. At least one member of the Committee will usually be present during the Shop opening hours. The Shop sells items useful for plot-holders, the profits from which are to be used by the Committee for maintenance, repair and improvements to the site. An annual report for the use of monies is to be presented to all Society members on or following the AGM.

The compost toilet is free to use by any member of the Society. Please read the instructions of use carefully.

Equipment

The Society holds several tools and equipment which can be rented from the shop. Some items of equipment are only allowed to be rented by trained users. An agreement to Terms and Conditions needs to be signed before any use. The use of equipment is restricted after 6 PM.

Dogs

Dogs are allowed on site however must be on a leash at all times.

Liability

The Council is the owner of the freehold in the land. The Council may terminate the Lease with a 12-month notice period. The Council does not accept any responsibility for damage or loss of property or any injury to a person on site.

Land cultivation

Use of land

The land can only be used for growing vegetables and fruit, keeping livestock (see section below), and any related purposes e.g. composting. Additionally, the Committee may use any surplus land for the benefit of Society members and to organise and hold events for the Society. The land may also be used for running the Allotment Shop. The use of land is not allowed for any other purpose without the written permission of the Council. The land will not be used for any dangerous, noisy or offensive activity, business, manufacture or occupation.

Area maintained

Continuous cultivation throughout the year is required, with above 80% of the area in use, including raised beds, sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels, compost areas, water butts, and maintained paths. It is a requirement to maintain the plot and to keep it clean and tidy and as weed-free as possible. No grass should ever be allowed to go to seed. The state of the plot will be regularly assessed by the Committee and should infractions be observed a letter will be issued as described in "Cases of insufficient cultivation" below.

Materials allowed on site

Compost, manure and other soil conditioners and enhancers can be brought on site for the sole purpose of improving the land. Fertilisers can be purchased from the Shop and used on site. No soil or sand may be taken from the site.

No rubbish is to be taken to or deposited on site. Specifically, no waste material, refuse, debris, spoil, carpets, tyres, trolleys, asbestos, gravel, or rubbish taken from your home is to be brought or kept on site for use or disposal.

The Society supports organic gardening and encourages reduced use of any insecticides, herbicide or peat-based products. The use of glyphosate-containing spray is not allowed on site. Use of any wildlife-harming chemicals is also strongly discouraged.

Compost and Fire

Only plant-derived materials can be composted using individual composting areas or burned. Only communal bonfires are allowed under organisation, execution and constant supervision by the Committee. The dates and times of bonfires will be communicated to the Society. Rubbish may not be disposed of by burning. Specifically, no rubber or plastics are to be burned, ever. Only burnable plant material - i.e. wood or branches – is to be collected and brought to the bonfire.

Green matter, including leaves, green stems and grass cuttings should be composted. Wooden branches can be kept until the bonfire days, when the fire will be assembled and lit. Please note that to prevent injury to wildlife the fire pile cannot be assembled in advance.

Livestock

Only hens (not cockerels), ducks, rabbits or bees can be kept on the Allotment site, and only with written permission from the Committee and must be kept in accordance with our animal welfare policy. Agreement of neighbouring plot-holders must also be obtained. The keeping of livestock is not to cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to any plot-holders.

Please note that official qualification documents are normally required to grant permission for keeping livestock. The animals will be visited and checked regularly by the Committee and must be kept in accordance to all regulations. Separate documents outlining the Conditions for keeping livestock on site are available upon request.

Trees, shrubs, and brambles

Only dwarf and only fruit trees are permitted on site. Regular pruning of all trees is required (at least annually), with maximum height allowed of 3m (10feet). Trees are not to be planted within 1.5m (5feet) of the adjoining allotment.

Only fruit bushes are allowed on site. Shrubs are not to be planted within 1m (3feet) of an adjoining allotment.

It is the plot-holder's responsibility to remove any young non-fruit and self-set trees from their area. Help and equipment can be provided by the Committee on request. The responsibility of the Committee includes all non-essential tree work: relating to light, shade, height and fallen branches. Removal of any dead or dangerous trees is the responsibility of the Council.

Blackberry and raspberry bushes are allowed only if properly maintained and contained within no more than 10% of the total plot area. Ivy must be kept to a minimum.

Sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels, wells, and water-butts

No building or well is allowed on site without the written approval from the Committee. The approval will be given if:

No more than 20% of the total area of the plot is in use for sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels, compost heaps, and wells.

The size of shed or greenhouse does not exceed 2.4 x 1.8 m² (8 x 6 square foot) on a standard 10-pole plot. The size of polytunnel does not exceed 10 x 3 m².

The size of shed, greenhouse or polytunnel does not exceed 1.8 x 1.2 m² (6 x 4 square foot) on a half 5-pole plot.

The building is not within 1m of any boundary.

Water collection and conservation is strongly encouraged, mostly via the use of covered water butts. Care must be taken not to introduce any polluting substances into the water supply.

Paths, hedges and fences

It is the plot-holder's responsibility to maintain the paths between the plots: these must be well-trimmed and accessible. These are not to be added to individual plots as land for cultivation and are a joined responsibility of the two neighbouring plot-holders.

It is the Committee's responsibility to maintain main roads in working order. Paths or roads must not be obstructed.

Maintenance of any hedgerows is the responsibility of the plot-holder.

Maintenance of the fence surrounding the site is the responsibility of the Society, apart from major replacement which is the responsibility of the Council. If any damage is seen, please contact the Committee immediately so that repair can be arranged. Barbed wire is only allowed with written permission from the Council.

Powers of Committee

The general management of the allotments shall be vested solely in the Committee. Should any matters arise which are not specially provided for in any agreement for the time being in force between the Association and a tenant, or in the rules of the Association, or these by-laws, the Committee shall have the power to deal with such matters in the best interests of all the allotment holders, and members shall be bound by their decision.

Cases of insufficient cultivation

Regular inspections are conducted by the Committee. No notice needs to be given of when these will occur. The land will be assessed based on use and cultivation status.

Please note that the Committee will make every effort to contact you in cases of dispute, but failure to supply accurate contact information via the yearly Registration Document may result in a loss of membership, as the eviction notice period for improvements runs for 3 months from the initial inspection. Contacting the Committee is crucial if you expect to be absent for a long period of time and would like to continue holding your plot.

Upon an initial inspection and if one or more of the following is evident –

- A. Below 80% of area cultivated.
- B. Neglect: Evidence of some work but insufficient control of weeds.
- C. Abandonment: No evidence of work in the last few months.

contact will be made with the plot-holder and a 1-month period given for improvements will commence (Month 1). A second letter with a second 1-month period is sent if the plot has not significantly improved (Month 2). If the main rule of at least 80% cultivation/use is not satisfied after 2 months from the initial contact, a final warning is made. One month after that the land is taken back and your rent and membership discontinued without a refund.

Failure to pay rent

The rent for the following year is due from the last Saturday of September until the 14th of October exactly. Failure to pay rent results in the plot being deemed vacant and let to a new member.

Offences and disputes

Cases of any offence need to be brought to the Committee's attention immediately, who will call a meeting to deal with it at the earliest opportunity. The Committee shall have the power to take such steps as they consider necessary. An appeal from the decision of the Committee may be granted at the Annual General Meeting upon written application signed by no fewer than 10 members.

Cases of disputes between two or more members shall be referred to the Committee, whose decision will be final.