

# Guide to keeping bees on Fareham Allotment sites.

## Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to prospective beekeepers who wish to place bee hives on Fareham's allotment sites. It sets out the process to follow and the actions that must be taken prior to formal approval being given by the respective Allotment Association.

## Stage 1 - Initial consideration

Any person wishing to keep bees on allotments in Fareham should first speak to the Allotment site Manager. The Manager will issue them with a copy of this document for initial consideration and guidance.

This document should be read in conjunction with the document LO15 'Allotment Beekeeping' Dec 2011 produced by the British Beekeepers Association.

In order that the initial request for the positioning of a beehive can be progressed, the suitability of the allotment site has to be determined and agreed by both the Allotment Association and Fareham Borough Council in the first instance, before the process can continue.

Any person wishing to keep bees must undertake to abide by any rules stipulated and must satisfy the managers of their competence or that they have arranged adequate supervision or will undertake appropriate training.

## Stage 2 – Consultation and management requirements

Once the site suitability has been determined in principle, it will be necessary to satisfy the requirements detailed in stage 2 in order that the proposals can be formally approved by the Allotment Association.

## Consulting process

All plot holders on the site must be consulted as to their views on siting a hive on the site. This should be carried out by representatives of the Allotment Association by asking plot holders to fill in a questionnaire (or simple tick sheet). An example of which can be found at the end of this document. At least 75% of plot holders should agree.

The Allotment Association must also inform/advise those neighbouring properties directly affected, to satisfy themselves that those properties have no objections to the siting of bee hives on the allotments and to also take the opportunity to alleviate any concerns that they may have. Ideally, letters should be written providing the relevant details. If felt advantageous, a personal visit may be appropriate. Records should be kept of any replies received/concerns raised.

Provided most consultees have no objections, hives can be placed on site subject to the requirements below being met. However, if any major concerns have been raised it must be considered as to how these will be addressed.

The allotments legislation is specific in that plot holders cannot trade on an allotment site for profit. (Small Holdings and Allotment Act 1908 Section 22), as the prime use is for an allotment holder to provide food for the immediate family.

However, it makes provision for limited sale of surplus produce – provided that the allotment is mainly cultivated for consumption by the plot holder and their family there is no legal constraint on selling surplus produce, and any proceeds should be reinvested in running and developing the site.

#### Carry out a risk assessment.

- Make sure all eventualities are covered.
- That any risks are identified
- There are actions identified to control any risks identified.
- Measures are in place to prevent bees swarming.

A person keeping bees on an allotment must satisfy the allotment site management that they have made adequate arrangements to ensure that any problems caused by their bees in their absence will be resolved, for example a nominated person that can step in the beekeeper's absence. Up to date contact details of a primary and secondary qualified and insured beekeeper should be made available on the Allotment site notice board in case of emergencies.

The allotment site Manager will be responsible for ensuring the conditions are met on which bees are permitted on allotments.

The Council requires that a person wanting to keep bees on an allotment will be a member of the local Beekeeping Association. Membership of a Beekeeping Association provides members with third party / public liability insurance through their affiliation to the British Beekeepers' Association.

The BBKA also offers support and advice for beekeepers.

Beekeepers must have a recognised qualification such as the BBKA Basic Assessment and be reasonably competent.

The hives must be registered and available for inspection by the Regional Bee Inspector.

The prospective beekeeper must ensure that they have insurance cover. It should be considered that all allotment sites have restricted public access and unforeseen incidents can happen. It is recommended that the level of cover is £10 million public liability, and that beekeepers must provide evidence of such on an annual basis. A record should be kept on file by the Allotment Association.

#### Stage 3 – Formal Approval

Once the requirements of Stage 1 and 2 have been met, the Allotment Association will confirm in writing that the plot holder/beekeeper has been granted permission to place bee hives on site.

The beekeepers, if not already, should become a plot holder and receive a tenancy agreement.

Prior to bringing any bee hives onto the Allotment site, all required documentation such as insurance details, confirmation of membership to the BBK Association and evidence of required qualifications shall be given to the Allotment Association for their records.

## Stage 4 – Operational requirements

### Siting of bee hives

Bees must be carefully placed to be away from footpaths and direct thoroughfares.

No more than 3 hives should be grouped together.

Do not place hives in positions from which flight paths impinge on other allotment users or pathways.

Arrange for hives to be sited in a remote area of the allotment(s) away from other plot holders.

Limit the number of colonies in any area.

Ensure that bees are encouraged to rise more than 2 metres before leaving the hive to ensure that the flight path is not directly over other plots. This can be achieved using a fine mesh screen of a gauge of less than 10mm. In some locations, it could be appropriate to use hedging or wooden fencing.

The bees should be screened for two reasons, so not to draw attention to them and to create a barrier to ensure the bees fly upward quickly to their normal flight height.

### Handling of bees

The beekeeper should as far as they are able ensure that the strain of bees used is gentle, for example by using a queen from a docile strain.

Do not handle bees when other people are gardening in the immediate vicinity.

Do not allow the strength of colonies to increase to swarming strength in an unmanaged way.

Handling bees should be done at times when the bees are very active, thus leaving fewer in the hive.

Always ensure there is someone else on site in case of emergency when handling bees.

A source of water should be easily accessible to the bees and be in place before the bees are established. Otherwise, bees may congregate around taps or any open water.

When opening hives every care should be taken to ensure that it is not a busy time (i.e. busy weekend afternoons.), and that the weather conditions are favourable (not raining, windy or thundery).

Signage notification, a "Beekeeper at work" sign placed prominently while the beekeeper is working and for around half an hour after will ensure that no one walks too near unless they want to.

All swarm precautions will be taken. It must be noted that swarms do happen sometimes and may also come from other sources.

Phone numbers in case of emergencies should be clearly displayed on a notice board.

Unused equipment should not be left around as it could spread disease.

If beekeepers were happy to show any interested parties the hives, then additional sets of protective clothing could be made available.

### Education

Consideration could be given to arranging an initial session/briefing for fellow plot holders to learn and be educated about the bees, how the beekeepers are planning to operate and advice on what to do in case of emergencies etc.

Once established, there could be further opportunities to extend the education process with the neighbouring schools, either by way of talks, site visits and honey tasting etc.

### Complaint process

Initially, any complaints from plot holders or members of the public should be directed to the site Manager for consideration and hopefully resolution. If the site manager is unable to deal with the complaint, then it should be referred to the Allotment Association Committee Chair.

Should it arise that several complaints are made then it may be necessary for a re-evaluation of the appropriateness of the siting of bee hives on the site to be undertaken.