

# Proposals for Managing the Elm Village Green Spaces and Greenhouse

Version 1.2 – 23 March 2010.

Prepared from numerous written and oral comments from residents by Peter McGinty, Secretary, Elm Village Community Garden Society. Update following Garden Society meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

**None of the proposals/options in this document are final; they are still open for discussion and change.**

**GOAL: to decide on how we will manage gardening within the green spaces.**

## Preamble

Firstly, to avoid any distracting discussion about which body will control / manage / oversee / direct ... the running of the new green spaces I've referred throughout to whatever body does take on that role as the '**garden club**'. This doesn't necessarily mean that it's a new body, it's possible it could be, or it could be the existing garden society or EVTRA or PfP or whatever. For the time being, it's just a placeholder name.

Secondly, there has been much debate and widely varying opinions on the subject of whether plots should be allocated to individuals, managed collectively with no individual allocation, or a mixture of both. Once again, to avoid becoming snagged by that debate, in what follows the word '**plot-holder**' should be taken to mean any of the many possible models of allocation – individual, group, shared, collective, community or whatever.

Thirdly, I need more opinions and ideas to ensure that what I am documenting represents a common consensus. I especially need input about how the growing space and plots should be allocated and managed. Everything you have to say on this will be helpful, the more specific you can be the better.

Fourthly, my apologies that this document is getting to be a bit of a tome but there's a lot to cover and as George Bernard Shaw said in one of his many letters "*I'm sorry this letter is so long, I didn't have time to make it shorter*" . . . . .

And finally, a couple of acronyms:

EVTRA - Elm Village Tenants And Residents Association  
PfP - Places for People

## 1 General Rules for Green Spaces Use

The following rules will apply to all Elm Village Green Space users, irrespective of whether they are individual plot-holders, shared plot-holders, communal plot-holders or non-plot-holders:

### 1.1 Security

1. Maintaining security is a mandatory requirement.  
All users must act responsibly and maintain a high level of security.

2. The gates must be kept locked at **all** times and opened only for legitimate access.  
This means that the gate should be locked behind oneself after gaining entry to work on a plot. Do not leave a gate open.
3. Access for gardening is restricted to 9am to dusk.  
But also see additional restrictions for the large triangle & greenhouse site.
4. Each of the three green areas has a named person who acts as 'guardian' to makes sure that residents are locking gates after themselves and a high level of security is being maintained (see 'Responsible Persons and Dispute Resolution' section)
5. All residents are entitled to a key but must apply for one in writing. They must also pay a charge for each key and provide a deposit (see 'Costs' section).

## 1.2 Eligibility

6. Every resident of Elm Village is eligible to apply to become a plot-holder.
7. Every plot-holder must be a resident of Elm Village.
8. The organization responsible for the garden maintenance of Elm Village (currently Camden Garden Centre) is eligible to apply for a plot.
9. Every plot-holder is automatically a member of the garden club.
10. When a plot is relinquished, control of the plot reverts to the garden club.  
Plots do not transfer with the plot-holders' address.

## 1.3 Fees & Payment for Gardening, Water and Keys

11. Annual fees and subscriptions are set by the garden club with oversight from EVTRA and PFP to ensure fairness. The objective is to break-even. There will be costs for:
  - a) Annual individual memberships
    - i. Full membership
    - ii. Junior (seedling/sapling?) membership for those under 10/16
  - b) Annual Water Consumption  
Thames Water will send an invoice at the end of the year for water used from the three (locked and metered) standpipes.
  - c) Keys  
It is not necessary for every household to have keys to the security gates. There will be published times when access for gardening is available.
12. All fees must be paid in advance.

## 1.4 Good Housekeeping

13. Gardeners must tidy-up after every visit as well as the end of every season and when the plot is relinquished.
14. Tools must be tidied away after use and not left out overnight. They should either be locked in a secure tool-chest or, if personal property, taken home.
15. No blocking of paths or shared spaces or other plots.
16. No squatting on unused plots.
17. No sub-letting (but you can share your plot with friends & helpers).
18. No animals (chickens, rabbits, pigs, goats, etc)
19. Anyone under 16 must be vouched for by an adult who takes responsibility for their actions.
20. No radios or loud noises.

21. No fires.
22. No smoking in the greenhouse and if you do smoke you should wash your hands before entering the greenhouse.  
This is an absolute prohibition to prevent contamination by tobacco mosaic virus.
23. The use any type of pesticide, chemical, fertiliser, manure, soil additive, etc., must be checked and approved by our horticultural expert, Mike Jackson, before being used.

## 1.5 Responsible Persons and Dispute Resolution

24. Each of the three areas (the large triangle, the south canal site and the north canal site) has a named person who acts as 'guardian' for it, making sure that residents are locking gates after themselves and that a high level of security is being maintained.  
The intention is that this should not burden the guardian with excessive responsibility, just that each site has a named individual who is an active user of that site (and ideally their dwelling overlooks it) and who is prepared to 'keep on eye' on it and help it remain a happy and safe area. They are a first point of contact for security issues but are not responsible for dispute resolution.
25. Every growing plot has a named person responsible for it.  
Except when the gardeners of a plot are all junior members, this will be one of the persons who gardens that plot. That individual is responsible for ensuring that garden club rules are abided by on that plot and for maintaining amicable relations with others.
26. Plot-holder disputes are resolved by the garden club. Any failure to agree is forwarded to EVTRA and then, if still not resolved, to PfP.

## 2 Managing the Three Green Areas

### 2.1 Large Triangle (including the greenhouse)

The large triangle area is bounded by Bergholt Mews, Barker Drive and Blakeney Close. It contains the greenhouse and some planting beds dedicated to permanent planting. The remainder of the area is paved.

The greenhouse is 4m x 7m with removable benches installed on both sides. Underneath the removable benches are 600mm wide soil trenches and the central area is paved.

The two issues that have been raised in nearly all conversations about the greenhouse and the large triangle area are:

- A significant number of residents have gardens that back directly onto the large triangle and the paths leading to it. Any lack of security will immediately affect all of those residents.
- During the growing season the greenhouse will need tending every day.

It's therefore proposed that Mike Jackson (of Camden Garden Centre) should have a special role for the large triangle space whereby Mike and his trainees have the authority to:

1. Open, close and water the entire greenhouse area and all plantings within it as they see fit. (This doesn't mean they are responsible for watering other people's plantings, just that they can do so if they decide it's appropriate)
2. Have complete control of half of the space within the greenhouse. The other half being for planting by individual residents.
3. Take unilateral action on any matter they feel affects the overall health of the greenhouse – especially pest control and neglected plantings.

Furthermore, as there will probably be quite a number of residents wishing to use the greenhouse and that it's imperative we preserve the security of the large triangle site for the neighbouring residents, I propose that:

4. Mike Jackson should define the days and times when residents can use the greenhouse (we want to avoid ad-hoc access by gardeners so as to keep the disturbance to surrounding neighbours to an acceptable level).
5. Key-holders should be limited to residents whose gardens back directly onto the triangle area. This should be workable as it's reasonable to assume that at least one of them or Mike Jackson will be available to open the gates on request at the advertised times.

## **2.2 Managing the South Canal Site (with the platform)**

This is being converted into tiered planting beds (it's a steep slope of grassland at the moment) with raised beds, a cold frame, composting facilities. The area at the top will be left as a 'wild-life' area with trees and naturalised plants. The wooden parts of the platform decking and railing, which have begun to decay, are being replaced by powder-coated metal.

There will be up to 40m<sup>3</sup> of growing space arranged in three tiers. The exact area is still TBA as it depends on the extent of the foundations of walls and platform supports discovered during diggings. An estimated one-third will only be suitable for shallow rooted plants such as herbs, salad vegetables, annuals, etc. When the earthworks are complete, individual plots of about 2 m<sup>3</sup> will be marked out so there could be as many as 20 plots in total.

Suggestion is that three of the plots are allocated to Camden Garden Centre trainees and the remainder to individual Elm Village residents. One plot to every requesting household if there are enough to go around, if not then plots will have to be subdivided or shared on some basis (voluntary or names out of a hat) in order to avoid the need for a 'waiting list'.

The platform is a communal resource for all residents and will be a great spot for daytime events and evening drinks. However, in consideration to the residents who overlook the platform area, advance notice is required for any activity that may be deemed 'noisy' or 'late'.

## **2.3 Managing the North Canal Site (behind the Constitution)**

This contains one large bed of about 1mx6m and two smaller ones of about 1m<sup>2</sup> each. One of our neighbours, Fergus, has put considerable personal effort into tidying up this area over the past couple of years. There's still plenty to do but due to his efforts most of the growing space is now a relatively weed-free zone. I therefore propose that Fergus is the nominated 'neighbourhood guardian' for this site, keeping an eye on the continued security of the area. Also, given that the planting space is relatively limited it should all be designated a communal planting area and not divided into individual plots.

### 3 Suggested Subscriptions & Costs for Gardeners

There will be costs to communal gardeners, individual plot-holders and greenhouse users. All of these costs that apply will need to be paid in advance.

#### 3.1 Keys to Gates

New locks are being installed on all gates to all three areas.

For general gardening purposes Camden Garden Centre or the site 'guardian' will open the areas for gardening at times to be agreed so that individual gardeners do not necessarily need a personal key.

- Cost of a personal gate key - £5 each (plus a £15 returnable deposit)  
And by implication, a register of key-holders will be kept so that the deposits can be managed properly (by whom is yet to be decided).
- It's also been suggested that there could be a recurring charge for holding a key and charges of £20 to £50 per annum have been mentioned. The advantage of such a recurring cost is that it would subsidise other costs, especially the charge for water.

#### 3.2 Water Charges

Three new standpipes are being installed, one in each area. Each one is metered and has a lock. Anyone having an individual growing plot or using greenhouse space will need to make a contribution to water costs:

- Cost of personal standpipe key - £5 (plus a £15 returnable deposit)
- Cost of water from standpipe - £20 per annum (this is my pessimistic-but-safe guess)
- Cost of standing charges to Thames Water – absorbed within existing PfP and Camden Garden Centre contracts

If at the end of the first year the water charges average out at less than twenty pounds each then we can arrange refunds. It's most important though that for the first year we don't end up with a deficit.

#### 3.3 'Garden Club' Subscriptions

Now that communal gardening at Elm Village has a secure future it is necessary to place the garden club on a formal financial basis. (Although in the past the de facto Garden Society has talked about subscriptions, we've never collected any and expenses to date have been absorbed by Garden Society committee members themselves.)

- Gardening Club subscription - £5 per annum.

#### 3.4 Minimum Costs for Gardeners

The minimum cost of joining in with the communal gardening activities is £25 per annum. That is £5 for the garden club and £20 towards water costs. (It will not be necessary for individuals to have a full set of keys for the gates and standpipes.)

### 4 How Should the Gardening Space and Plots be Allocated?

All three areas being redeveloped are communal areas for the benefit of all Elm Village residents. Beyond that shared point of agreement however there are many diverging opinions about how the

improved spaces should be allocated to residents for the purposes of gardening activities – some residents preferring that the space should be subdivided and allocated entirely to individuals as *individual* plots, others that it should all be *communal*, and yet others wanting a *mixed* approach. There have also been suggestions that plots should be segmented by growing interests – for example different areas for herbs / vegetables / flowers / fruit.

I've summarised here the more popular suggestions together with what might be the plusses & minuses of each:

#### **4.1 Individual Allocation**

Individual households apply for a plot and a plot is allocated to them. They can then garden that plot however they choose.

- + Every allocated plot has a named person responsible for it.
- + There is never any disagreement about what should be grown or harvested.
- + It's very clear who is responsible for any neglect.
- There might be a waiting list.

#### **4.2 Shared Allocations**

Households apply for a plot either individually or on a shared basis. If there are enough plots to go round then a plot is allocated to everyone. If there are more requesters than plots then requests are grouped on some basis until the number of groups matches the number of plots.

- + Every allocated plot has a group of named persons responsible for it.
- + There is never a waiting list.
- Disputes among joint plot-holders may arise.
- Who decides who gets grouped with whom?

#### **4.3 Communal**

There is no individual allocation of a plot. The space is worked by the group with a planting plan, task list, individual responsibilities, caretaker roles, and cover for holidays, etc. The growing plan and work rota is updated at regular intervals by the group, probably under the guidance of Mike Jackson of Camden Garden Centre.

- + There is never a waiting list.
- + Enhanced community involvement.
- + Cover for holidays and 'weekends away' is automatically catered for
- Possible disputes about harvest distribution.
- There is no named person responsible for an individual plot (though the community could nominate one person per plot as the responsible person).

#### **4.4 Communal Planting Plan + Individually Managed Plots**

Much like the communal option, at the beginning of the gardening year (usually deep midwinter!) a comprehensive 'planting plan' is worked out jointly by all gardeners. This defines exactly what will be planted on each plot e.g. thyme, carrots and beetroot on plot one, broad beans and peas on plot two, courgettes on plot 3, and so on. Individuals and groups then volunteer to garden particular plots.

- + There is never a waiting list.
- + Enhanced community involvement.
- + Every plot has a named person responsible for it.
- Possible disputes about harvest distribution.

#### 4.5 A Mixed Approach – Some Communal, Some Shared, Some Individual

A Pick n' Mix of any combination from all the above.

#### 4.6 Greenhouse Space

There are two options (which easily fit all the options above):

- 1) Greenhouse space is allocated in tandem with outside plots.  
So if you are allocated an outside growing space you are automatically allocated some greenhouse space.
- 2) Greenhouse plots and outside plots are allocated separately.  
That is, you can be allocated one without the other.

### 5 Miscellaneous

And a small collection of points that don't seem to fit anywhere else:

- 1) Space in cold-frames is under the control of Mike Jackson of Camden Garden Centre, not allocated to individuals.
- 2) The compost in the communal compost bins is under the control of Mike Jackson of Camden Garden Centre and will be distributed as he sees fit.
- 3) Gardeners are at all times expected to be considerate to others.

## 6 Appendix

### 6.1 Key Control Policy

Our discussions about locks and keys imply that we will have a 'key control policy'. Below is a simplified version of an example provided to me by a security organisation which I propose we adopt:

By requesting and accepting a key to the communal areas of Elm Village the requestor agrees to abide by all of the conditions of this key control policy.

The implementation of this key control policy will be performed by an individual or organisation known as the **key-safe**. The identity of the **key-safe** will be determined by agreement between PfP and EVTRA.

The **key-safe** is responsible for maintaining Elm Village's communal space key control system and for authorizing the dissemination of keys.

Those seeking a key must obtain a "Key Request Form" from the **key-safe**. After a key request form is received and approved, the **key-safe** will arrange for the key or keys to be provided.

Key requests will be reviewed by the **key-safe** and no reasonable request withheld.

All keys to communal spaces are, and at all times remain, the **key-safe's** property and may be recovered at any time.

Records of keys and key-holders, including the names of individuals to whom keys are issued, dates of issue/return/loss will be maintained by the **key-safe**.

Fabrication, duplication, possession, or use of keys to Elm Village communal spaces without the written agreement of the **key-safe** is a violation of this policy.

Residents found in violation of this policy may be asked to return keys. Non-residents found in possession of unauthorized keys may be reported to the police.

- end of key control policy -

## 7 Greenhouse Health, Safety & TLC

The warm, moist climate in a greenhouse benefits plants but also means that pests and diseases breed and spread faster.

Prevention is always better than cure!

Always inspect plants before bringing them into the greenhouse to ensure they are not introducing pests or diseases. It may help with cuttings to wash them in water with a few drops of washing-up liquid added before bringing them into the greenhouse.

Seeds are not a problem.

Seed, cutting and potting composts must be clean, fresh and part bags should be wrapped up to prevent weeds, pests and diseases getting inside the bag. Tools, pots, containers etc should also be clean.

Tobacco products can contain Tobacco Mosaic Virus (TMV), a serious disease which affects a wide range of plants particularly tomatoes. PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE IN THE GREENHOUSE. Ideally smokers should wash their hands before entering.

Plants which are adequately fed, watered and receiving the light they need are more resistant to attack than neglected plants.

Weeds act as hosts for pests and diseases, so they are a source of infection. Weeding, particularly under benches or between paving stones or on the surfaces of compost in pots as an ongoing operation.

Despite all the above hygiene precautions pests, diseases and weeds will always find their way into any greenhouse. Keen observation and early intervention are important here. We will endeavor to use organic methods of control whenever possible.

Pests particularly found in greenhouses are red spider mite, whitefly, mealy bug and scale insect. Fortunately there are two very effective natural predators we can use against the first two mentioned. Diseases include powdery mildew, grey mould and the so-called damping-off diseases of seedlings.

Birds and mammals, such as squirrels, dogs, cats, mice and rats, can be destructive too and also need to be excluded.

This greenhouse is made from polycarbonate sheeting so it is much safer than glass. Floors in greenhouses can get slimy from algal growth so we need to keep the floors swept. In consideration of fellow users please tidy up your own mess and take home your personal tools etc and don't use the greenhouse as your own personal store.

Take care of hose pipes being a trip hazard. Always reel-in the hose pipe after use and put it back.