



Allotments
Planning advice
PA2023-02

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Purpose of this Planning Advice

This non-statutory Planning Advice *has been published to provide* guidance on planning matters associated with delivering allotment sites. It supports Policy P2 Open Space and Access in New Developments as set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023.

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1. Introduction

Green infrastructure is key to planning principles at Local, Strategic, National and European level and should be at the heart of planning for open space. Green infrastructure can be defined as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, and to provide environmental, economic and social benefits through natural solutions¹, including allotments.

¹ European Commission, Ecosystem services and Green Infrastructure:
https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

The legal definition of an allotment is accepted as a plot of land measuring approximately 250 square metres, within a community of other plots, tended by a plot holder singly or in partnership with others, holding the rental agreement². Nowadays plots of this size are regarded as typical, but in fact the size (and shape) will depend on what can fit into the site.

This Planning Advice provides details on the land use planning regime to be used for allotments. The Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy 2010 states that new development of over 50 homes should provide a minimum of 40% open space. Smaller sites should provide a minimum of 120 square metres per home. **As part of the open space provision, all new developments of over 50 homes are encouraged to provide community food growing areas such as allotments or orchards**³. Proposals should also be in line with Policy P2 Open Space and Access in New Developments of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. Local Authorities have a duty to source, assess and procure new sites to cater for increasing demand, and support community group aspirations in the creation or reinstatement of allotment sites. Plots can be leased to individuals, community groups, and other groups such as schools, nurseries and care homes.

Conditions on the use of allotments may also be provided through individual allotment associations and these will vary from site to site. Generally, they will include the acceptable height of plant growth, paint colours used, path materials, restrictions on size and materials used to construct sheds and greenhouses, other acceptable structures, whether the keeping of livestock, for example bees or chickens is permitted, and acceptable boundary treatments between plots. Plot holders agree to abide by these rules when accepting a tenancy for a plot. Suggested further reading is provided in Appendix 1.

² The National Allotment Society

³ Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy 2010, Appendix 1, Hierarchy of Open space and Appendix 2: Standards of Open Space:
<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6077/approvedpandospacesstrategy.pdf>

2. Policy and Regulatory Context

2.1 National and Local Guidance

Within National Planning Framework 4, as part of the National Spatial Strategy, it is identified that improved open spaces will build resilience and provide wider benefits for people, health and biodiversity, in a balanced way. NPF4 Policy 15 identifies access to an allotment as a measure that may contribute to local living, and Policy 23 promotes allotments, or other community food growing initiatives, as a measure that demonstrates that a development proposal has a positive effect on health. NPF4 sees provision of allotments as Spatial Planning Priority for the North East to benefit health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities as an integral part of placemaking.

2.2 PAN 65 Planning and Open Spaces 2008

PAN 65 categorises different types of open space for use by planning authorities when undertaking Open Space Audits to inform an Open Space Strategy. The typology defines allotments and community growing spaces as open space. It also suggests that planning authorities should establish if there is demand for allotments via consultation with relevant local groups (PAN 65, paragraph 29).

2.3 The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997

Under The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 allotments are categorised as Use Class *Sui Generis*. **Due to their nature, most new allotment sites will be developed on land that was previously amenity greenspace or agricultural land, and as such a planning application for a change of use is required.**

2.4 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 specifically updates and simplifies legislation relating to allotments. It reflects the standard size of 250 square metres per plot but allows the flexibility to provide varied plot sizes as agreed by the Local Authority and the tenant. It states that rents must be “fair” taking account of site specific variables such as services provided and the cost of providing these services. The current rent payable for plots managed by Aberdeenshire Council

range from £38.39 to £53.39 per annum (2021).

Local Authorities are required to keep a waiting list and take reasonable steps to identify new allotment sites if demand increases, and waiting lists become longer. Furthermore, legislation requires Local Authorities to develop a Food Growing Strategy that identifies land that can be used for allotment sites. Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Service currently manages 5 sites, all of which are fully occupied and have waiting lists. Details of the Council managed allotments sites and how to be added to the waiting lists can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website⁴.

3. Allotments in Aberdeenshire

The majority of allotment sites in Aberdeenshire are managed by committee run allotment associations. These bodies take responsibility for the day to day management of the site such as managing the tenancies, accounts, and creating and governing their rules and regulations. Such associations often rent the land from the Council, but allotment sites may also be privately rented or owned. Where sites are managed by an allotment association, the fees will most likely differ from Council fees, and may also include an annual membership fee and costs to cover other sundries such as paint for boundary fences and gravel for communal pathways.

It is anticipated that new allotment sites in Aberdeenshire would be managed by independent charitable allotment associations regardless of whether they are provided through open space provision on new developments, procured by Aberdeenshire Council, or rented or acquired privately. More information about forming an allotment association can be found in the Allotments Regeneration Initiative Fact Sheet, 'Gardeners in Charge'⁵.

⁴ Aberdeenshire Council – Allotments: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/tenant-information/tenancy-agreement/allotments/>

⁵ Allotment Regeneration Initiative: Gardeners in Charge: https://www.barnetallotments.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ARI_GiCh_Fact_Sheet_2011.pdf

4. The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 Policies and the Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy

Policy P2 Open Space and Access in New Development of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, states that new development must be accompanied by adequate public open space in accordance with Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy 2010⁶. If this is not provided, the proposed development is considered to be a departure from local development plan policy. Appendix 2 of the Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy 2010 promotes community food growing areas as part of the mix of open space for new residential developments of over 50 homes. Furthermore, it provides ratios of plots per person/household and maximum distance from the development.

In order to change the use of land to a formal allotment site, planning consent will be required. A wide range of issues associated with the new use of the site have to be considered. These are set out below.

4.1 Access and Accessibility

In line with the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, Policy RD1 Providing Suitable Services, applications should include details of access and car parking provision. A transport impact assessment may be required to ensure that any additional traffic will not create an overly adverse effect within the area.

Where an allotment site is forming part of the open space provision of a new development, it is the responsibility of the developer to provide suitable access to the site and water supply as and where required. The site should be located adjacent to other greenspace to allow for flexibility of changes in demand resulting in possible future change of use or expansion.

Access must always be provided for less mobile groups, for example; dropped kerbs, suitable pathways and other measures of good design. Raised beds provide

⁶ Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Space Strategy 2010:
<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6077/approvedpandospacesstrategy.pdf>

accessible gardening opportunities for children and the less mobile, and consideration should be given to the siting of them, ideally near the entrance of the site and adjacent to pathways.

4.2 Waste and Waste Water

While connection to a mains water connection may be desirable, not all allotment sites will require a connection. Guttering from sheds and greenhouses running into water-butts may provide a sustainable and free water supply to water the crops. However, where a planning application does include connection to mains water, this should be assessed against Policy RD1 Providing Suitable Services of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, and applicants should be encouraged to have pre-application discussions with the Planning Service and if applicable, SEPA and Scottish Water. A single standpipe may be all that is required for modest allotment proposals.

Not all allotments will require connection to mains drainage as compostable toilets and soakaway drainage are often the preferred option. Where connection to mains drainage is required; this must also be assessed against Policy RD1 Providing Suitable Services, to ensure that water and waste water are planned in accordance with the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023.

4.3 Policy P1 Layout Siting and Design

It has been noted that some allotment sites can attract objections on the basis of visual amenity and increased traffic, so boundary screening should be planned for both in terms of security and appearance as appropriate for the surrounding area, and be in accordance with Policy P1 Layout, Siting and Design of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. Detailed information on site infrastructure including appropriate fencing and gates can be found in section three of Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide 2013⁷.

5. Plot-holders' Sheds

The National Allotment Society suggest that a shed measuring no more than 4.4

⁷ Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide 2013:
<https://www.scottishallotments.org/files/documents/15611d72-94ed-4013-99bd-f45943204fd1.pdf>

square metres (8ft x 6ft) should be sufficient for allotment use (based on a 250 square metre plot)⁸, as illustrated in Figure 1, and this should be reduced for smaller plots. For example, it would be appropriate to have a 2.2 square metres (4ft x 6ft) for a half size plot as illustrated in Figure 2.

Sheds should be used primarily for tool storage, as such glazing (if any) should be no more than is reasonably expected to allow light into the shed. Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide 2013 provides comprehensive advice on the siting and types of sheds with their respective merits and disadvantages⁹. Windows would generally, be expected to be restricted to one wall of the shed and should not exceed 30% of the total area. Large windows make sheds less secure and could attract anti-social behaviour and theft.

Sheds are expected to be constructed from conventional materials such as wood, plastic or metal. Structures constructed from materials such as brick, block or stone are considered a permanent structure. These elements would be controlled through planning conditions on individual allotment sites.



Figure 1: A typical 8ft x 6ft shed

⁸ The National Allotment Society – Sheds and Structures: <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/sheds-and-structures/>

⁹ Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide 2013: <https://www.scottishallotments.org/files/documents/15611d72-94ed-4013-99bd-f45943204fd1.pdf>



Figure 2: 4ft x 6ft sheds with no glazing on a half size plot. Those illustrated are from the Stonehaven allotment site.

6. Other Structures

Other structures that would not normally be associated with allotment use such as public toilets, communal buildings, clubhouses or any other permanent structures should form part of any planning application to allow for consideration and consultation.

Greenhouses on removable bases, poly-tunnels, cold frames, fruit cages, waterbutts and compost bins are generally accepted as temporary structures that would be expected on allotments. It is not necessary to submit details of these structures with the planning application or to apply for planning permission when installing them. The regulation of installing such structures would generally be included in the rules and guidelines as part of the tenancy agreement with the allotment association or landlord.

Appendix 1 – Further Reading

Planning Advice Note PAN 65 Planning and Open Space:
(<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2008/05/30100623/0>)

Recipe for Success – Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy:
(<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/06/25133322/0>)

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGs):
(<https://www.scottishallotments.org/>)