

Guide to keeping bees on City of Lincoln Council allotment sites

Purpose of Document

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

Stage 1 – Initial consideration

Any person wishing to keep bees on allotments in Lincoln should first speak to City of Lincoln Council. A copy of this document for initial consideration and guidance will be issued.

This document should be read in conjunction with the document "*Allotments & Beekeeping*" produced by the *British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)*.

In order that the initial request for the positioning of a bee hive can be progressed, the suitability of the allotment site has to be determined and agreed before the process can continue.

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

Stage 2 – Consultation and 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.

Consulting process

Neighbouring properties directly affected must also be informed, in order 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. Records should be kept of any replies/ concerns raised.

A prominently displayed notice on the plot and noticeboard must be put up to notify neighbouring tenants of the request to keep bees on the plot.

During the growing season, this must be for at least 28 days. Outside the growing season, this must be for 56 days and must indicate that a request has been made to the City of Lincoln Council.

Provided the majority of 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.

Should the City of Lincoln Council receive an objection, based on allergy or medical grounds, and is substantiated, the application may be refused.

The allotments legislation is specific in that plot holders cannot trade on an allotment site for profit (Small Holdings and Allotment Act 1908) as the prime use is for an allotment holder to provide food for their immediate family. However, it makes provision for the limited sale of surplus produce.

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 City of Lincoln Council that they have made adequate arrangements to ensure that any problems caused by the bees in their absence will be resolved. For example, a nominated person that can step in during the beekeepers absence.

Up-to-date contact details of a primary and secondary qualified and insured beekeeper should be made available on the allotment plot and allotment site notice board in case of emergencies.

The City of Lincoln Council 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 BBKA. 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 accidents can happen. It is recommended the level of cover is £10 million public liability, and that beekeepers provide evidence of such on an annual basis. A record will be kept on file.

Stage 3 – Formal Approval

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

The beekeepers must be a plot holder.

Prior to bringing any beehives on the allotment site, all required documentation such as insurance details, confirmation of membership to the BBKA and evidence of required qualifications shall be given to the council for their records.

Stage 4 – Operational requirements

i. Siting of bee hives

- Bees must be carefully placed to be away from footpaths and direct thoroughfares.
- Do not place hives in positions from which flight paths impinge on other allotment users or path ways.
- Arrange for hives to be sited in a remote area of the allotment away from other plot holders.
- Limit the number of colonies in any area.
- Ensure that bees are encouraged to rise in excess of 2 metres before leaving the hive to ensure that the flight path is not directly over other plots. This can be achieved by the use of 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 they fly upward quickly to their normal flight height.

ii. 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 they bees are very active, thus leaving fewer in the hive.
- Always ensure there is someone else site in case of an emergency.
- 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 and that the weather conditions are favourable, i.e. when not raining, windy or thundery.
- Signage notification, 'Beekeeper at work' sign should be placed prominently while the beekeeper is working and for around 30 minutes 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.
- In case of emergencies, phone numbers should be clearly displayed on a notice board.
- Unused equipment should not be left around as it could spread disease.
- If beekeepers are happy to show any interested parties the hives then additional sets of protective clothing should be made available.

iii. Education

- Consideration could be given to arranging a 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.

iv. Complaint process

- Initially, any complaints from plot holders or members of the public should be directed to the City of Lincoln Council for consideration and hopefully resolution.
- 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 to be undertaken.