



Elmsbrook Community Gardens

James Livingstone

Contents

Outline	3
Management	4
Allocation	6
Maintenance	7
Development	8
Ethos & Integration	9
Data	10
References	11
Appendix 1 – Maps	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2 - Charter	13
Appendix 3 – ‘Plot occupancy document’	14
Appendix 4 – ‘growing in the community’	15
Appendix 5 – ‘A place to grow’	16
Appendix 6 – Application Form	17

Outline

The development comprises of two phases of mixed tenure properties. As part of the construction of phase 3 and 4 of the Exemplar a number of garden style areas are being created for use. These garden areas have similarities in their layout as traditional allotment areas but much smaller.

Management

A2Dominion will take responsibility for management of all communal areas in the garden sites. Initially this will include all aspects of allocation, walkways, equipment, shared utilities, and inspections

Individual plots will be allocated as per the allocations plan detailed below. Successful applicants will be asked to sign a garden charter, a draft of which is available in appendix 1. This charter will set out the general ethos of the garden in a way that the legal agreement cannot.

We aim to treat the available plots as small growing areas, suitable for fruit, vegetables and flowers. Due to size restrictions there will be no consideration given to the keeping of animals.

Individual plot occupiers will be responsible for the upkeep of their own plots and the terms of this maintenance will be set out in the license agreements used to commit a person to their plot. An example can be found in appendix 2. A2Dominion will also remain responsible for any unallocated plots.

While the land the gardens are sited on is part of A2Dominion's grounds we will take a best practice approach to the management of these areas and, as there are similarities, intend to follow the guidance issued for the management of allotments by 'The National Allotment Society' and in particular two key documents.

The first, 'Growing in the Community', is stated as *"This guide is designed to assist those responsible for managing allotments, either within local authorities or under schemes for devolved management, to work efficiently and effectively by emulating examples of good practice"* (Local Government Association 2009). A copy of this document is available for reference in appendix 3.

The second, 'A place to grow', is stated as *"it provides good practice guidance on how to make the most of existing allotment sites through good management of allotment portfolios."*

(Local Government Association, February 2010) A copy of this document is available for reference in appendix 4.

Allocation

Plots will be allocated through a combination of 'first come first served' and level of need. For example a person applying for a garden who lives in a property that has no garden area will receive greater priority than a person who has, even if they were added to the list after the other.

The gardens are intended to be used by the community to enhance lives by aiding the integration of residents to their new homes, community and neighbours. As such A2Dominion consider these sites an investment. For the first two terms (2 years) we do not intend to levee any charge for Elmsbrook residents or partnering groups.

To allow us to properly assess progress and take on board improvements and alterations to practice, initial agreements will be set to end on the same date (or closest legal period) one year from the opening of the garden sites. If uptake is not sufficient we will look to offer the shortest legal agreement to new comers to put agreements in sync. By doing this we will allow ourselves the ability to implement any agreed changes or developments.

In accordance with best practice we will look to openly publish waiting lists in an online, GDPR complaint format.

People will register an interest for a garden by completing an application form, a draft copy is in appendix 5.

Maintenance

While under the management of A2Dominion the garden communal areas will be inspected once a week by the Park Ranger service in place at Elmsbrook. Weeds will be cleared, pathways litter picked and tidied, vacant plots administered and invasive species removed.

Plot occupiers will be offered the opportunity to learn how to maintain their own area and allowed to do this with the support of A2Dominion and partner contractors.

Monthly inspections of plots cultivation will take place to make sure that plot holders maintain and active level of interest in their plot. In the first instance of any signs of non-cultivation, a gentle reminder will be issued. If no further cultivation takes place during the next month then a written note will be issued and offers of support will be made. If not progress is made then we may consider issuing notice of our intention to reclaim the plot and allocate elsewhere.

Development

The gardens will be managed and run by A2Dominion for as long as is necessary, however the clear goal is for the evolution of a Community Organisation to take on the management of these areas. The timings and depth of the involvement will very much depend on the level of engagement and appetite from local residents and community groups. Our initial outline set out in the 'Management' and 'Allocation' sections above is designed so as to give us a much flexibility to respond to appetite for change quickly while at the same time giving a clearly defined structure that can be allowed to continue on a rolling basis if pace is slower.

Individual plot holders will be met with twice a year to receive feedback and keep an open dialogue on day-to-day aspects of the gardens and hear any suggestions or alterations needed

A natural breakpoint in agreements, one year from inception, has been integrated for a review of the gardens to take place. The review will build in relevant elements from the twice yearly meeting above, canvas opinions of past and present plot holders, the wider Elmsbrook community, involved contractors, and partnering groups. This feedback will be reviewed and used to further develop this strategy for the future year. This review will happen yearly for a minimum of the first two years and will be shared with the local community and stakeholders.

Ethos & Integration

As with all of A2Dominions Community Investment work carried out at Elmsbrook our primary objective is to work with residents and local stakeholders to build a vibrant community that is actively part of the wider Bicester area.

Our belief is that the gardens at Elmsbrook offer a unique opportunity to further integrate residents in the wider Bicester area. Our approach with the management of the garden sites will be two-fold

- Act as an incubator or feeder experience for new growers
- Devolve management where possible to duly recognised groups

The sites will be used as incubators for experience by using the sizing of the plots at Elmsbrook to act as a funnel for experience and learning. We aim to build links with Bicester allotment groups who may have larger areas to encourage those to take on full or half allotment (5-10 rods) as they grow comfortable doing so. By doing this we foster interaction between plot holders, local groups, allotment holders and the wider Bicester community.

We will look to encourage devolvement of the gardens by working with local groups while also being keen not to limit the growth of the direct community in anyway. At Elmsbrook there is already a thriving community developing with a strong spirit of cooperation. The community currently work together to plan and deliver community events and foster the continued cohesion of the development. One of the most established groups in the development is EGG (Elmsbrook Gardening Group) and we intend to integrate with this group over the next year to enhance the current management of the garden sites by co-creating a development strategy. If the appetite is there we will work towards devolving responsibility of some areas of the management and allocation back to the community via this group while also working with the group to self-sustain longer term. It is key that devolvement happens at a pace the community, and ourselves managing the area initially, can accept. It is for this reason that we will offer periodic licenses for plots so that we can support the evolution of any management group.

Data

Data from prospective plot holders will be held by A2Dominion who will comply with all necessary legislation such as GDPR to protect people's data. Contact information of involvement with other groups will not take place without a plot holders explicit consent.

References

- 1: National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (The National Allotment Society)
<https://www.nsalg.org.uk>
- 2: Local Government Association
<https://www.local.gov.uk/>
- 3: Bicester Town Council
<https://www.bicester.gov.uk/>
- 4: The really useful allotment tenants handbook
<https://www.bicester.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The-really-useful-Allotment-Tenants-handbook.pdf>

Appendix 1 - Charter



Elmsbrook Community Gardens

James Livingstone

Appendix 2 – ‘Plot occupancy document’

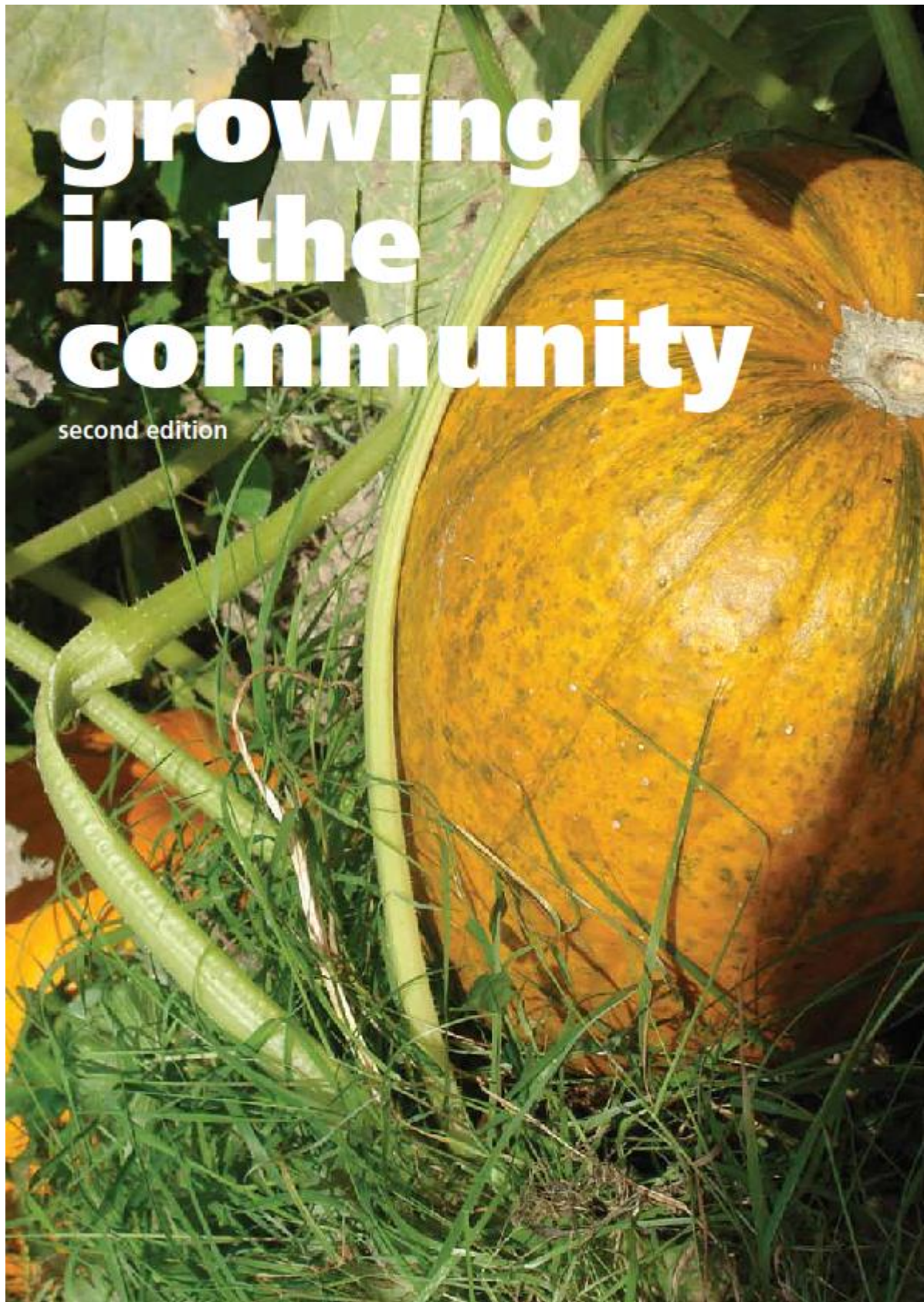
NW BICESTER ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

AN AGREEMENT made on the [insert date] between NW Bicester (in this document called 'The Company') of [address] and [insert name] of tenant or tenants who are letting the allotment in this agreement called 'The Tenant' of the other part.

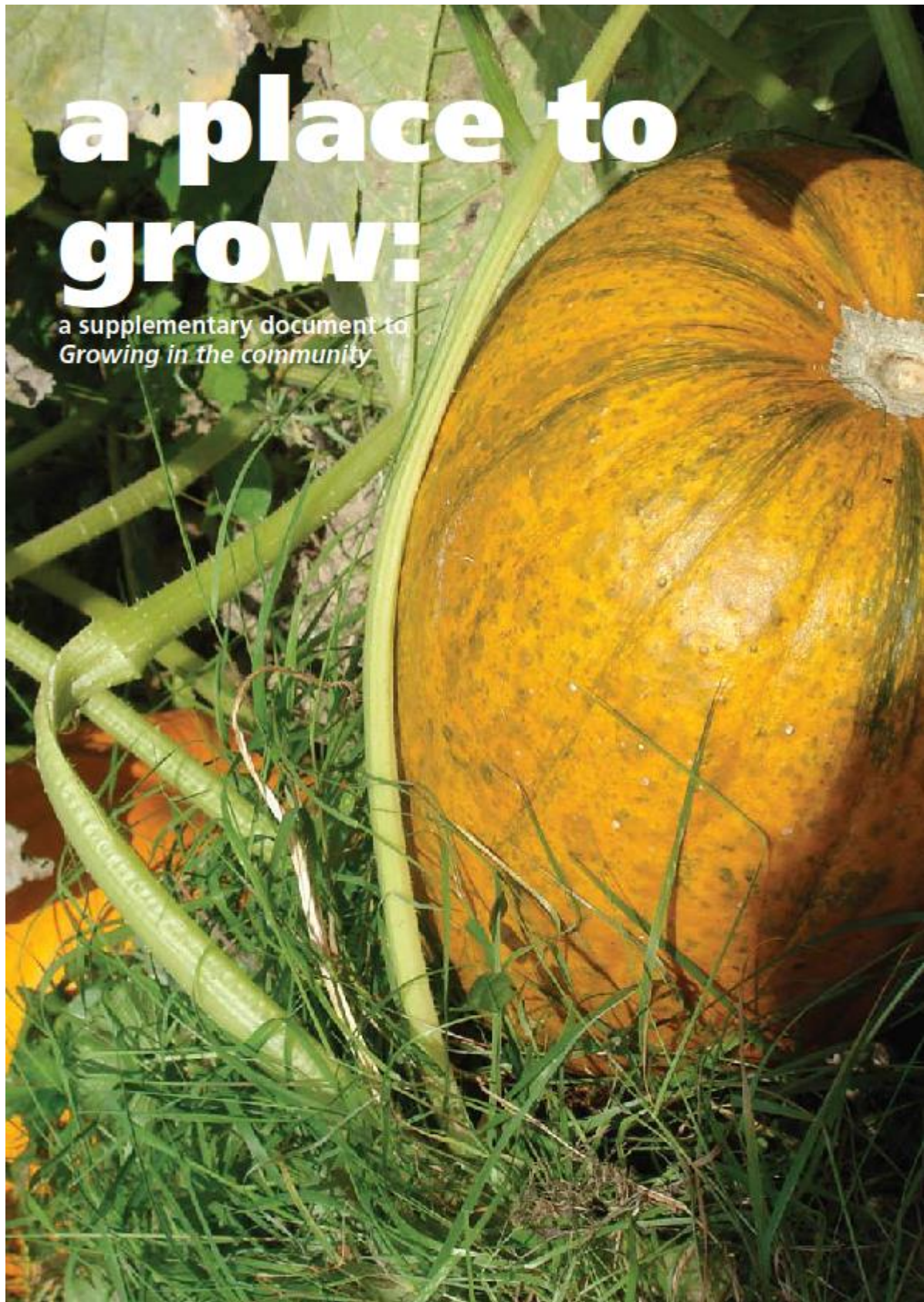
WHEREBY IT IS AGREED as follows:

1. The Company will let and the Tenant will hire from the [date] to the [date] and thereafter yearly, the allotment garden number [allotment number] at Bicester.
2. **The rent**
 - a) The tenant shall pay a yearly rent of £ [insert amount] whether demanded or not which shall be payable in full yearly in advance.
 - b) Any increase in rent will be notified to the Tenant at least one month prior to the next rent collection date.
 - c) If the expenditure incurred by the Company in managing the allotment gardens at Bicester in any one year is more than the anticipated expenditure for that year the Company may add any excess costs to the rent charge to the Tenant in the next year and such excess will be apportioned on a pro rata basis across all the allotment gardens.
 - d) If the expenditure incurred by the Company in managing the allotment gardens at Bicester in any one year is less than the anticipated expenditure for that year the Company shall apply such excess to the reserve fund set aside for items of major expenditure.
3. **The Tenant agrees:**
 - a) To use the Allotment Garden only for the production of fruit, vegetables and flowers for use and consumption by him/herself and his/her family.
 - b) Not to use or cultivate the allotment garden for the purposes of trade or business or for any other purpose other than as an allotment garden.
 - c) At all times to keep the allotment in a good state of cultivation and fertility including but not limited to keeping the allotment free of weeds with airborne seeds during the growing season (8 April to 31 September in any year). To inform the Company if the Tenant is unable to cultivate any or the entire garden.
 - d) Not to cause any nuisance or annoyance to the Company or other tenants of the allotment site, or to neighbouring households, or to obstruct or encroach onto any path set out by the Company for the use of the occupiers of the allotment garden.
 - e) Not to underlet, assign or part with the possession of the allotment garden or any part thereof without the written consent of the Company.
 - f) Not without the written consent of the Company to cut or prune any of the hedges around the site, or to take, sell or carry away any mineral, gravel, sand, clay or topsoil.
 - g) To keep the shed and paths on or adjoining the allotment garden properly maintained and in good repair, e.g to keep the grass cut and to keep the paths free from weeds. In the case of a path abutting on to the allotment garden or any other allotment garden, not to dig or to do any other thing which will reduce the path width.
 - h) Not to erect any additional shed, greenhouse or poly-tunnel on the allotment garden.
 - i) To carry out all reasonable directions which may from time to time be given by the Company by its' appropriate officers to preserve the allotment garden from deterioration.
 - j) Not to use barbed wire for a fence adjoining any path set out by the Company for the use of the occupiers of the allotment garden.

Appendix 3 – ‘growing in the community’



Appendix 4 – ‘A place to grow’



Appendix 5 – Application Form



APPLICATION FOR AN ALLOTMENT GARDEN

Details:	
Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone:
Mobile:
Email:

Preferred site:	
Area 1 – Starter area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Area 2 – Enhanced Area	<input type="checkbox"/>
No preference	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like to apply for an allotment garden. I agree to be put on a waiting list if there are no plots vacant at the time of application.

Signature:

Date:

For Office use only:	
Plot number allocated:	Date:
OR	
Date added to waiting list:	