

Spelthorne Borough Council
Bee Keeping on Allotments

The allotment site

Not all allotment sites are necessarily suitable for beekeeping and the Council will consider each application on its merits.

The beekeeper

The beekeeper must be a paid up Member of a local beekeeping association affiliated to the British Bee Keepers Association. This Membership carries public liability insurance of up to £5m should there be loss or damage because of the bee keeping.

The beekeeper must demonstrate experience in the handling of bees and will not be permitted to keep bees on an allotment in his first year of beekeeping.

The beekeeper must demonstrate that they have obtained, or are studying for, a formal qualification in bee keeping (such as the BBA "Basic Assessment" examination or equivalent) which demonstrates competence in management and manipulation of bees.

The hives

There shall be no more than two hives on any one allotment plot, or one "nuc" (small colony) per beekeeper. The total number of hives that can be accommodated on any particular allotment site will depend on the size of the site and will be assessed by the Council on case-by-case basis.

The location of hives needs to be carefully selected to minimise inconvenience to those around, whether neighbours or passers by and must be agreed with the Council. They would usually be in a quiet corner of the site or towards the centre of an allotment plot, so that they are not too close to other plot holders, neighbouring houses or paths.

All hive equipment is to carry a suitable mark identifying its owner.

Bees are to be encouraged to fly at a good height (i.e., above head height) by surrounding the hives with a 2-metre high fence or similar boundary; (bird netting, trellis covered with plants, hedging or tall plants can be adequate). The position and construction of this fence/barrier is to be agreed with the Council prior to its installation.

Beekeeping

The beekeeper must ensure that there is a water supply for the bees on the plot and close to the hives, so the bees do not fly to plunge tanks, or other water sources.

The beekeeper must practice effective methods of swarm control and carry out regular inspections (at least once a week during the swarming season) for signs of swarming and there should be cover for this if the beekeeper is away.

It is noted however that Swarming is a natural phenomenon and no matter what steps are taken, there will inevitably be occasions when colonies will swarm.

The beekeeper should behave sensibly towards those who are likely to be affected by the bee keeping and the rights and concerns of adjoining plot holders must be recognised, and steps taken to minimise the inconvenience. The beekeeper will need to be considerate when carrying out manipulations and ensure that these are not done when there are others nearby or when there are likely to be others nearby or before the bees have again settled having been disturbed. This agreement will be terminated, and the hives will have to be removed from the allotments if considerable nuisance is caused.

The beekeeper should be aware of the temper of the bees and shall not bring onto the allotments colonies that are known to be aggressive temperament. If colonies are unnecessarily aggressive, then they should be requeened with a queen from a reputable supplier of "docile strains".

The allotments are not to be used for the storage of equipment that does not contain bees.

The beekeeper should ensure that the Council and the site representative know how to contact him if there is a problem with one of the hives. A sign should be displayed in a communal area on site giving contact numbers and if the beekeeper is not likely to be available, he should arrange for cover to be provided.

Miscellaneous

Beekeepers should always be prepared to discuss the bees with those interested, particularly fellow plot holders, they may even wish, for instance, to display an observation hive at prearrange times so other plot holders can view the bees at work or keep one or two spare veils so that they can take anyone interested right up to the hive and show them what is going on.

Defra officials, the Regional Bee Inspectors, have statutory powers to access hives to deal with disease. The Council will co-operate fully with them in this regard.