

Shaping
the future

Food growing

Supplementary Planning Document – draft

www.portsmouth.gov.uk



Foreword

With the recent launch of Southsea Greenhouse and the Portsmouth Food Partnership, and the city's newly-affiliated membership of the Sustainable Food Cities Network, it is clear that there is rising interest in local food production. This movement is being driven by a number of factors including a desire for healthier lifestyles, an appreciation of the wellbeing value of food growing, and a move towards more sustainable communities.

To help meet this demand the city council has recently improved the use of existing allotments, however in dense urban environments such as Portsmouth there appear to be few areas of space which are available for new allotments.

Opportunities do however exist to create innovative food growing spaces such as through rooftop gardens and green balconies. This documents aims to provide guidance to developers about how to add value to their developments through the inclusion of food growing spaces. The document also provides advice to community groups on how they can create new food growing spaces in existing buildings and spaces around the city.

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Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 Food growing spaces can take many forms such as temporary community gardens, allotment plots on the rooftop of a housing block, or private balconies with growing beds. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which is for developers, planning officers and community groups, sets out the benefits of food growing and how it adds value to development. It also provides guidance to developers on how to incorporate food growing spaces in new developments, as well as providing advice to community groups on how to establish new food growing spaces in underused sites across the city. In addition, the SPD sets out design and technical considerations to take into account when planning food growing spaces.
- 1.2 This document has been informed by the National Planning Policy Framework which encourages sustainable development and the securing of multiple benefits from the use of land, including food production.¹ The document is also supported by the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy and the city council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, which both promote local food production². In addition, this document is also supported by the following policies from the Portsmouth Plan 2012-2027:
 - PCS13 (A Greener Portsmouth)
 - PCS14 (A Healthy City)
 - PCS15 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

Benefits

- 1.3 The city council is keen to promote new food growing spaces as they can provide multiple benefits to developments and the wider community. This included improving people's health and wellbeing, providing educational opportunities, supporting local biodiversity, helping to regulate temperature of buildings, and increasing the value of development. Due to these benefits, food growing spaces are considered to contribute towards the three dimensions of sustainable development as shown in figure 1.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012)

² Green Infrastructure Strategy (PUSH 2010)



Figure 1 - the 'three dimensions' of sustainable development

Social sustainability

- 1.4 Gardening can provide multiple health benefits including good exercise, fresh air and sunlight. It can also provide mental health benefits such as decreased levels of stress and increased self-confidence. Furthermore, food growing spaces provide opportunities to meet new people and socialise, increasing community cohesion. If designed appropriately such areas can also be used to host community events such as a picnic or cookery classes.

Environmental sustainability

- 1.5 Food growing spaces provide numerous environmental benefits including supporting local biodiversity, helping to clean the air and water, and providing a location for community composting. Rainwater can also be collected on-site through rainwater harvesting systems, which in combination with permeable surfaces can contribute towards reduced surface water flood risk. The produce created at a food growing spaces would also have low food miles, helping to reduce carbon emissions.

Economic sustainability

- 1.6 Food growing spaces are a good way to increase access to fresh and healthy produce, especially for people on lower incomes. In addition, food growing spaces can provide opportunities for people to enhance their skills and self-confidence, improving their employment opportunities. For developers, food growing spaces can add value to development, and can even be rented out to help support building maintenance costs. For commercial developments, the inclusion of green areas has been shown to improve worker wellbeing and productivity; a key aspect of successful businesses³. On a wider level, the creation of food growing spaces can help to uplift an entire area.⁴

³ Would you be happier living in a greener urban area? (University of Exeter 2013)

⁴ Planning sustainable cities for community food growing (Sustain 2014)

- 1.7 The creation of new food growing spaces in Portsmouth will also help to meet a number of the city council's objectives, such as;
- Encouraging and enabling healthy choices and making Portsmouth a sustainable city (Portsmouth Plan: p.13);
 - Promoting the sustainable use of energy, water and land (Sustainability Strategy: p.9,13);
 - Incorporating lifestyle features in housing that cuts emissions and encourages food production (Greener Homes Strategy: p.1);
 - Delivering sustainable communities set in a quality low carbon environment (Regeneration Strategy: p.19);
 - Developing the contribution physical activity makes to the promotion of healthy lifestyles in Portsmouth (Portsmouth Sport and Physical Activity Strategy: p.19);
 - Creating an age-friendly city by encouraging healthy lifestyle choices which promote physical, emotional and mental wellbeing (Portsmouth's Ageing Population Strategy: p.19).
- 1.8 Foods growing is also very popular; despite a recent increase in the number of allotments and grow zones in the city, demand for food growing spaces continue to outpace supply⁵, and with projected population rises, demand is likely to increase further.

where else to look

- Portsmouth Plan: www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/7923.html
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD: www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/23686.html
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf
- Sustainability Strategy 2010: www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/cmu-sustainability-strategy.pdf
- Portsmouth's Ageing Population Strategy 2010-2020: www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/pln-local-dev-housing-ageing-population-strategy.pdf
- Greener Homes Strategy (2009): www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/cou-policies-greener-homes.pdf
- Portsmouth Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2002-2007: www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/cou-policy-sport-physical-activity.doc
- Portsmouth Regeneration Strategy (2011): www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/cou-regeneration-strategy.pdf

⁵ Parks and Open Space Strategy 2012-2022 (PCC 2012)

Process

Suitable sites

- 2.1 Food growing spaces could be appropriate for a range of areas, including:
- Residential rooftops, balconies, gardens and landscaping;
 - Commercial developments - internal areas or landscaping;
 - Common land in housing estates, retirement homes or student halls of residence;
 - Allotment plots;
 - Land owned by a charity for public benefit;
 - Land within existing parks and recreation grounds;
 - Old churchyards and cemeteries;
 - School or hospital grounds;
 - Urban fringe agricultural land;
 - Waste ground and derelict sites.
- 2.2 While allotments are the most popular option for delivering food growing spaces in urban areas, given the lack of available land in Portsmouth, innovative solutions may be required. Paragraph 2.16 provides examples of some of the many types of food growing spaces available.

Developers

- 2.3 Where appropriate, the city council will encourage the inclusion of food growing spaces in new developments and will discuss the principle at the pre-application stage. The potential for food growing from different types of development is set out in table 1.
- 2.4 For residential developments of 50 or more dwellings, depending on the proposal, a growing site could count towards the provision of on-site open space as required by the Housing Standards SPD.
- 2.5 When seeking planning permission for a proposal which includes food growing, regard should be made towards the design and technical considerations shown in paragraph 2.15. The considerations should be suitably addressed in a submitted Design and Access Statement. Any submitted Landscaping Plan should also set out how food growing opportunities have been considered, and where appropriate, incorporated into the development. If the site has the potential to be contaminated, this should be addressed through a submitted Desktop Study as a minimum. A site-specific investigation may also be required. If contamination is found then suitable mitigation measures would be expected.
- 2.6 If a proposal which includes a food growing space is approved, the city council would seek to secure the ongoing use of the growing space through attached conditions.

Community

- 2.7 There may be opportunities for community groups to establish growing spaces on underused public and private land. Once a potential food growing site has been identified, the community should consider the following questions:
- Is the site a suitable size for what your group wants to do?

- Are there sufficient volunteers involved to maintain the site?
- Could it be made accessible to everyone in your community?
- Could it be made secure, including having any tools stored safely?
- Are there others interested in the site, e.g. other groups, businesses?
- Is there a current planning application for the site?
- What planning restrictions are in place, e.g. listed buildings, road access, parking requirements?
- Are there rights of way or easements across the site?
- Are there services on or near the site, e.g. water, electricity, gas, sewers, drains, telephone/cable?
- What was the site previously used for?
- Is the land likely to be contaminated by a previous use?
- Are there any plants or habitats present that should be conserved?
- Who are the neighbours and are they likely to be supportive of a food growing space?

2.8 If the answers to the above questions are favourable, the next step will be for the community to discuss the proposal with the landowner and any occupiers. In the case of an underused site, the landowner may have intentions to develop the site, however they may also be happy for the site to be used temporarily for a food growing project. The advantages for a landowner of doing this include:

- The community group may take on the maintenance of the site, reducing ongoing costs for the landowner;
- Use of the site may reduce anti-social behaviour and uplift the value of the site and area;
- A small rent may be offered.

2.9 To provide assurances to the landowner, a clear exit strategy should be agreed prior to food growing commencing. A 'meanwhile use' lease agreement may also be offered. For more information on meanwhile leases, please see the webpage:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/meanwhile-use-leases-and-guidance-for-landlords

2.10 Once the community have secured written consent from the landowner and any occupiers, they should then discuss their proposal with the city council through the submission of a pre-application enquiry. For more information on pre-applications please visit the city council website and search for 'submitting a pre-application enquiry'.

2.11 While the city council will judge each food growing proposal on its own merits, it would usually seek to support proposals where the community have:

- Identified a clear need for food growing and have sufficient volunteers involved;
- Identified a suitable potential site that is demonstrably underused;
- Have written permission from the landowner and any occupiers;
- The proposal shows good design principles (as described in paragraph 2.15);
- The proposal will enhance public land and not be to the detriment of other users';
- The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon nature conservation;
- An adequate management plan is proposed, including how to return the space to its previous use if demand for food growing significantly declines.

2.12 There may also be opportunities for local residents to establish 'community composting' schemes on small parcels of green space. These schemes would allow people who do not

have access to outside space - such as residents of flats - to create compost. The compost can then be used on allotments or gardens, or given to a community garden scheme. To be successful, community composting schemes would need to be appropriately managed by its members to ensure high standards are maintained. For an example of a successful community composting scheme please see: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/environment/recycling-rubbish-and-street-cleaning/community-composting

2.13 In addition to creating new food growing spaces there are opportunities for people to share existing food growing areas, such as the council's 'grow zones'. For more information on grow zones, please visit the council's webpage and search for 'growing food'. The city council also has a number of friends groups established for people who wish to garden. These include:

- Rock Garden Friends;
- Friends of Cumberland House;
- Friends of Milton Park;
- Portsdown Hill and Hilsea Lines Volunteers.

For more information on these and other volunteer groups please visit the 'Portsmouth Together' website.

2.14 There may also be opportunities for people to 'garden share' on another person's allotment or garden, sharing some or all of the gardening responsibilities and produce. For more information on garden sharing please visit the Landshare website: www.landshare.net

Considerations

2.15 Once a potential opportunity for food growing has been identified by either a developer or the community, the following technical and planning issues should be considered:

Design

- The proposed type of food growing space should be appropriate to the site conditions and the needs of the proposed growers.
- Growing spaces should ideally be south-facing and receive direct sunlight. If this would not be possible then it may restrict the type of produce which can be planted on the site. Consideration should also be given at this stage toward the likelihood of future development or building extensions which could impact upon the conditions of the growing space.
- Some types of plants can struggle to grow in exposed locations, particularly those that are near the coast and subject to salty sea wind. Therefore it may be appropriate to consider using the site layout or screening methods such as trees or hedge planting to help shield the growing area.
- Site security is a critical concern and may require the erection of a fence. A storage shed/office may also be required to store tools and organise the running of the growing space.

- If possible, growing spaces should be designed to be flexible, allowing it to adapt to future demands. This could include converting the space to general amenity space should there be a significant decline in demand for food growing.

Access

- The growing space should be laid out in such a way so as to provide adequate access, particularly for person with disabilities. This should include providing appropriate access for the bringing in of earth and gardening tools, both of which have the potential to be very heavy. This could be a particular concern for rooftop or balcony growing.
- To prevent damages, the restriction of access for pets to the food growing spaces should also be considered.

Amenity

- The space should be designed so as to not lead to a significant loss of amenity for the occupiers of surrounding residential properties (such as through increased overlooking or loss of privacy). The impact of increased levels of noise and activity which the growing space could create should also be considered and appropriately minimised.
- Growing spaces should not have a significant adverse impact upon visual amenity. To achieve this, consideration should be made towards the layout of the space in relation to surrounding buildings and the wider streetscape.
- For proposals in new and existing residential developments, a balance should be maintained between the provision of space for food growing and the provision of general-purpose private amenity.

Contamination

- If the site has the potential to contain contaminated soil it should be assessed prior to use. Depending on the circumstances, suitable mitigation measures may be required. This could for example include using raised beds with semi-permeable membranes to prevent the upwards movement of particles. For more information on contaminated land, please visit the city council's website and search for 'developing contaminated land'.
- For community sites, any soil which is brought in by community gardeners also needs to be tested to ensure it is free of contamination.

Air quality

- Food growing sites should avoid being directly exposed to one of the city's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). For information on AQMAs, please visit the Portsmouth City Council website and search for 'Air quality and pollution in Portsmouth'.

Water

- A reliable water supply is essential to support a successful growing space. Ideally this would be provided through a sustainable rainwater harvesting system such as a rooftop collection and water butt however an on-site mains tap could also be appropriate.

Soil

- Different types of soil support certain types of plants, so consideration will need to be given towards the preferred produce. If existing site soil is going to be used, then the quality of the soil may need to be checked, to see whether it would support food growing. Furthermore, some soils are more lightweight, so may be more appropriate for indoor locations. Due to the risk of erosion, light soils may not however be suitable for more exposed locations such as rooftops or sites near to the coast.
- Provision of on-site composting facilities should also be incorporated into a scheme to increase environmental and financial sustainability.

Management

- To avoid growing spaces becoming unsightly and underused, it is crucial to consider management issues at the earliest available point, preferably at the design stage. Management considerations should include:
 - Who the growers will be and what the selection process will be;
 - Who will maintain the space and how will it be funded;
 - Who will own the gardening tools and how will they be stored safely;
 - How pests will be managed;
 - How soil health will be maintained;
 - How the site will be accessed and secured;
 - How visual clutter will be minimised;
 - Proposed hours of use;
 - Who will consume the produce.
- In residential dwellings, private growing spaces would usually be maintained by the residents, while Residents Associations or contractors could manage communal spaces. Additionally, growing spaces can be rented out to residents for a small fee, with the funds collected going towards site maintenance.
- Public buildings such as schools and hospitals have established communities, including staff, students and other users. Such a community could collectively manage the growing spaces, potentially in conjunction with a caretaker. For commercial buildings, growing spaces could be managed by an in-house maintenance team or external contractors (see table 1).
- The management plan should determine what to do with the space if there is a decline in demand and the space is no longer being used for food growing. As this point it may be appropriate for the food growing space to be converted into general amenity space. Adaptability, as well as the future funding and maintenance of unused spaces should therefore be considered at the design stage.

Types

2.16 While allotments are the most popular approach to providing food growing space in urban areas, growing spaces can be delivered in a variety of ways. Given the dense urban fabric of Portsmouth innovative solutions will be required to deliver new food growing spaces. A number of different approaches to food growing spaces are shown below, however this should not be considered to be an exhaustive list.



Allotments

Allotments are spaces for individuals to grow produce and even keep chickens. Individual allotments can be space intensive and are regulated by statutory legislation, so they might not be appropriate for every type of development such as those which require a flexible management approach.



Community garden

A community garden is an area where local residents share gardening responsibilities. Community gardens have the advantage of being able to accommodate more growers in a given space than allotments, as well as allowing more flexibility in the amount of time individuals need to commit to the project.



Community orchard

Like a community garden, community orchards are communal spaces where different members of the local community can come together and manage the space.

Compared to community gardens, community orchards often require less maintenance so may be more suitable for time-pressed communities. If designed appropriately they can also make excellent leisure spaces.

Image credit: London Permaculture, CC License



Image credit: Vmenkov, CC license

Edible landscaping

When designing landscaping schemes, edible plants such as fruit and nut trees and vines can also be included. Additionally, alongside ornamental plants, growing bed could include edible shrubs such as artichoke, rhubarb and herbs, as well as fruit and berry bushes. In public spaces, edible species would need to be clearly identified from inedible ones.

Compared to other growing spaces, edible landscaping often requires less or even no maintenance. Permaculture or 'cottage and potager' gardening styles can also be employed to support a mixed approach and reduce maintenance requirements.

Careful thought will need to be given towards the safe layout of edible landscape schemes to avoid people trampling growing beds or straying onto roads whilst collecting produce. Access to edible landscaping may also need to be restricted to prevent trespassing.

Raised beds

Raised beds are purpose-built structures, ideally made of untreated wood which provide a suitable growing medium. They are often used in spaces where there is little or no soil, such as on development sites or rooftops, temporary growing spaces, or contaminated areas.

To provide wheelchair access, the beds should only be up to 0.6 metres high. It is also recommended that beds should only be up to 0.9 metres wide where access is from one side only, or 1.2 metres wide where access is from both sides.

Land awaiting development can be utilised for food growing through tonne bags filled with soil. When the site is due to be developed, the bags can be moved to a new site.



Image credit: Bart Everson, CC license



Image credit: David Shankbone, CC license



Image credit: Suzette, CC license

Roof garden

Rooftops can make excellent growing spaces due to their good access to sunlight and water, and their proximity to potential growers. They are especially suited towards high-density areas and communal properties such as housing blocks or offices.

Green roofs are one example of rooftop growing spaces and come in 'extensive' or 'intensive' systems. Extensive systems are lightweight and as such are not usually designed for roof access. They instead provide energy-efficiency, water management and biodiversity benefits. Intensive green roofs have deeper soil levels and are appropriate for food growing and other recreational activities.

Alternatively rooftop growing spaces can be provided through the addition of raised beds or growing containers. In all rooftop growing spaces regard will need to be made at the design stage towards rooftop loading and drainage, safety and access considerations, and whether wind protection would be required.

Green balconies

Balconies can make excellent growing spaces in high-density areas, particularly in residential flats. Suitable produce could include herbs or salad greens. Balcony growing spaces can be composed of window boxes or containers, raised beds, or even extensive roof systems.

In all green balconies, consideration should be given towards the balcony's aspect, as north facing balconies with substantial overshadowing may struggle to support food growing. The loading and drainage capacity of growing food on a balcony should also be considered at the design stage.



Wildflowers

There has been a notable reduction in the UK bee population over the last few decades, with the loss of wildflowers being considered a significant factor.

Therefore the inclusion of wildflowers in landscaping schemes will help to support a healthy bee population as well as other species such as butterflies. Furthermore, unlike many hybrid flower species, wildflowers are self-seeding, so often have lower ongoing costs.



Internal garden

Internal growing spaces can be provided through courtyards or atriums. As well as creating growing opportunities, internal green spaces can provide added benefits to building users including improved wellbeing and productivity.⁶ Internal gardens also have the added benefit of providing access all-year round, potentially increasing uptake.

In addition, internal growing spaces can support plant varieties which would usually struggle in the UK, such as tomatoes or citrus fruits. With all internal growing spaces, careful regard will however need to be given towards irrigation, drainage and lighting.

Image credit: Spaceo, CC license

where else to look

- Developing Contaminated Land SPG (2004): www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/dev-dev-contaminated-land-guide.pdf
- Guide for growing on land which may be contaminated (2014): www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1486604.pdf
- Meanwhile use leases and guidance for landlords (2013): www.gov.uk/government/collections/meanwhile-use-leases-and-guidance-for-landlords
- Community orchards: how to guide (2011): www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11466/1973262.pdf

⁶ Would you be happier living in a greener urban area? (University of Exeter 2013)

Example approaches

Type	Design	Management	Produce
Residential			
Land available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allotments • community allotment • community orchard • edible landscaping • garden sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private spaces managed by residents • communal spaces managed by a Residents Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumed by the residents
Land available (contaminated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roof garden • raised beds 		
No land available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roof garden • green balconies 		
Commercial			
Limited land available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • edible landscaping • intensive green roof • internal growing spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managed by external contractor with help from staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumed in the company canteen or by staff
Community			
Land available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community allotment • community orchard • edible landscaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed by staff and users with caretaker oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumed by the community

Table 1 - Example design and management approach

Appendix

Developer case studies



Image credit: Radian

Stoneham Green, Southampton

This development by Radian housing association includes eleven 'Code 6' homes with adjacent allotment gardens for each home. The allotments were provided on a small strip of derelict land which adjoined the site.

In order to inspire residents to produce their own vegetables and fruit, Radian also hosted a number of gardening workshops to give advice and teach residents how to get the best from their allotment.



Image credit: Brighton & Hove City Council

One Brighton, Brighton

The One Brighton residential block in central Brighton was jointly developed by Crest Nicholson and BioRegional. The scheme comprises 28 'mini' rooftop allotments which are rented out to tenants who maintain them, with some oversight from the caretaker.

The plots have proven to be very popular, with a higher demand for plots to rent than are available. The plots have also helped to bring residents together and build a sense of community.

Community case studies



Image credit: Southsea Greenhouse

Southsea Greenhouse, Portsmouth

Southsea Greenhouse is a community project which has established a communal allotment on a derelict strip of land in Canoe Lake. Along with growing beds, the site also contains a shed which acts as an office and tool store.

The garden is supported by an organiser and a core team of local volunteers. To support its income, the project sells vegetable boxes and plants.



Stacey Centre Community Orchard, Portsmouth

As part of the Healthy Pompey project, a community garden was established on a piece of wasteland connected to the Stacey Centre in Baffins.

The garden has been maintained by a team of growers from the Healthy Pompey project in addition to volunteers from the local area.



Landport Grow Zone, Portsmouth

The Landport Grow Zone was also established by Healthy Pompey on a part of a park in Arundel Street.

The space provides opportunities for 15 local residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables. The residents have also set up their own gardening group to support each other, which include workshops for new growers.

Resources

- **Carrot City**
A research initiative that explores how design can enable the production of food in cities
www.ryerson.ca/carrotcity
- **Edible Estates**
(National Housing Federation 2014) A good practices guide for social landlords on supporting food growing initiatives on social housing owned land.
www.housing.org.uk/publications/browse/edible-estates-a-good-practice-guide-to-food-growing-for-social-landlords
- **Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens**
A charity which supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms across the UK
www.farmgarden.org.uk
- **Food Matters**
A national food policy and advocacy organisation working to create a more sustainable and fair food system.
<http://foodmatters.org>
- **Guide for growing on land which may be contaminated**
(Grow Your Own Working Group 2014) Advice note on growing food on potentially contaminated land
www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1486604.pdf
- **Meanwhile Foundation**
Offering advice on 'meanwhile uses' of land such as temporary community gardens.
www.meanwhile.org.uk
- **Planning for a Healthy Environment**
(TCPA 2012) Good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity.
www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-for-a-healthy-environment-good-practice-for-green-infrastructure-and-biodiversity.html
- **Planning Sustainable Cities for Community Food Growing**
(Sustain 2014) Guidance note on how planning can support community food growing.
www.sustainweb.org/news/apr14_planning_sustainable_cities
- **Portsmouth Food Partnership**
The Partnership includes key public sector organisations as well as a range of business and NGO representatives, working together to promote healthy and sustainable food, improving dietary habits and health outcomes.
<http://sustainablefoodcities.org/findacity/cityinformation/userid/442>
- **The Permaculture Association**
Advocacy group for sustainable farming principles, with a particular interest in urban farming.
www.permaculture.org.uk

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