



Living at Firepool Lock: a freeholder's handbook

A friendly guide for everyone who lives in one of our 65 houses, owner or tenant: how the estate works, who looks after what, and the few things worth knowing before you pick up a spade or a paintbrush. It is a neighbourly guide, not your Transfer Deed; if the two ever disagree, the Deed wins.

Welcome to Firepool Lock

Hello, and welcome, whether you collected your keys last week or have been here since the builders left. This is a short guide to how the estate works, written by neighbours for neighbours. We have tried to make it more useful than a rulebook, and a lot shorter than the legal documents behind it.

Firepool Lock is 141 homes beside Taunton station: 65 freehold houses, mostly along Firepool View, and 76 flats in seven blocks. Houses and flats share the same roads, paths, lighting and landscaped areas, and we all contribute to looking after them.

Who does what:

- **The Management Company** (Firepool Lock (Taunton) Management Company Limited) looks after the shared parts of the estate: the roads and paths, the landscaping, the lighting and the parking areas. As a freeholder you are a member, and you pay your share as the rentcharge in your Transfer, in two instalments on 1 January and 1 July.
- **The three directors** run it. They are volunteers: Tim Rigby (chair), Rob Deville and Ugur Karakus. Tim and Rob each own a flat on the estate, though neither lives on site.
- **GTH Property Management** in Taunton is our managing agent. Their team handles most things, and the best way in is the general email, property.management@gth.net, so that your message reaches everyone.
- **The freeholder of the flats**, Aviva Investors Ground Rent, matters mainly to flat owners. For your house, your Transfer Deed is the document that counts, and GTH will help if a question touches on anything wider.

The Firepool Lock website is becoming a simple page that points you to these handbooks and to GTH, so this handbook and GTH are the first places to look.

One honest note. For a while our letters and emails reached the flats more reliably than the houses, which we are working to put right. If you have not been getting our updates, please tell GTH and we will put it right.

Your home and garden

It is your house, and you are free to enjoy it. The Transfer Deed, though, carries a few promises that were made so the estate keeps its character, and they bind every owner, now and in future. Here are the ones that tend to matter in practice.

Trees, shrubs and landscaping. The planting at the front of your house was part of the original Crest Nicholson scheme, and you are asked to look after it. That means no removing trees or shrubs, and replacing anything that dies. The same goes for planting boxes, stonework, railings and similar features: please leave them as built, and do not paint or decorate them.

Extensions, porches, sheds and outbuildings. The Deed says you must not add to or alter your house in a way that substantially changes its outside appearance without prior written consent, which cannot be unreasonably withheld, and any rebuilding should follow the original as closely as is reasonable. That covers extensions and porches. Sheds and garden buildings were tightly controlled during the first five years after your Transfer, so if you are unsure whether yours needs consent now, ask GTH before you order the kit. Please also keep washing lines and airers behind the front of the house, as the Deed does not allow them forward of the front elevation.

Satellite dishes and aerials. No dish on the front of the house or anywhere forward of it, and any external TV or radio aerial or dish anywhere on your property needs prior written consent first.

Hard surfaces. Gravel, paving, a track-bed system or any other new surface to create extra parking or widen a drive needs written permission first. We deal with this more fully in the parking section, and it is the request we receive most often.

Other things to keep in mind:

- Lorries, commercial vehicles, caravans, boats and trailers cannot be parked anywhere on the estate, your own drive included, apart from a delivery or collection that is genuinely short. That includes the shared areas.
- The house is for private residential use only, and the Deed allows only the usual domestic machinery on the property.
- Building work still needs the usual planning permission or building regulations approval. Our permission is in addition to those, not instead of them.

If you are not sure whether something needs permission, ask GTH. It takes one email, and it is much cheaper than taking down a shed.

That yellow strip on the plan

If you look at the plan that goes with your Transfer Deed, you may see a yellow-hatched strip running across or near some of the plots. That is the **drainage easement**, and it protects the sewers underneath. The strip extends three metres from the centre line of the sewer.

In plain terms: nothing gets built in it, no trees or deep-rooted shrubs get planted in it, and nothing may block access to the sewers. That is permanent and it applies whether or not a job looks small. Works in or across the strip need the written consent of the drainage authority, which is Wessex Water. The Management Company cannot give that consent for them, and will not pretend to.

The most common way people run into this is a drive extension, a patio or an EV charger cable run. If your plans go anywhere near the hatching, speak to GTH at the very start, before you spend anything on drawings or contractors. The Deed also keeps a 1.5 metre zone either side of the gas supply pipe clear of buildings and deep-rooted planting unless the pipe's owner agrees, and asks you not to plant or block any part of your plot that the highways authority needs kept clear for visibility.

Parking and driveways

Every house has one or two allocated bays, shown on the plan with your Transfer. Those bays are yours to use, for one private car or motorbike each, taxed, insured and parked within your own space. The flats' bays have been marked and numbered, but the houses' bays have not been marked across the estate, though a few have been. Since 1 April 2026 Link Parking has patrolled the estate to keep the roads and shared areas clear.

Two things that surprise people.

There is no visitor parking on the estate. Crest Nicholson designed it that way, and it is not something the directors chose. The only spaces marked VP on the plan, at the end of the parking strip by plot 96, are for visitors to plots 128 to 132 only. Everyone else's visitors park on the public streets around the station, within the council's restrictions. If your friends are visiting, point them to the streets nearby and avoid the roads, verges and bays of neighbours.

Roads, verges and open ground are not parking. That includes the entrance road from Station Approach and Trenchard Way, the croft opposite plots 79 to 85, and the orchard beside plot 120. Parking there blocks emergency vehicles and wears out the grass, and it attracts a Parking Charge Notice.

A few more points:

- Caravans, boats, trailers, lorries and commercial vehicles are not permitted anywhere on the estate, drives included, apart from a delivery or collection that is genuinely short.
- Tradespeople and health visitors coming to your house should be registered with Link Parking beforehand: 01935 315494, option 5.
- Parking Charge Notices are issued and kept by Link Parking. The money does not come to the Management Company, and no service charge is spent on enforcement. If you think one was wrong, appeal to them directly.
- Visitor permits exist only to let a guest use your own bay when you are away, never to park somewhere else.

Extra parking and surfaces. Extra parking, or a wider drive, made by laying gravel, paving or a track-bed system is not something we can simply approve, because the parking arrangements are fixed by the Transfer Deeds and the plan. Some of the relevant covenants are held collectively by all owners on the estate, so a "yes" from us does not always settle the matter. Please speak to GTH before you commit to anything.

Electric vehicle chargers. These are welcome in principle. Talk to GTH before you hire an electrician. You will need Wessex Water's consent if the cable route or equipment goes near the drainage strip, and cable routes or surfacing that change the look of your frontage may need consent under the Deed (see Asking permission below). Keep within safety and planning rules.

Rubbish and recycling

Somerset Council collects your rubbish, recycling and food waste. For most households in Somerset the recycling and food waste go every week. Your own days are on the [council's collection page](#), and the helpline is 0300 123 2224.

Putting your bins out. The council asks for containers to be at the edge of your property by 7am on collection day, and no earlier than the evening before. Your Transfer Deed goes further: bins must not be left where they can be seen from the road, other than on your collection day. It sounds fussy, but a row of bins left out all week looks untidy on a street that is otherwise very smart, and it gets in the way of buggies, wheelchairs and emergency vehicles. Please bring them in again once they have been emptied.

Sorting. The council is particularly keen on a few points:

- Recycling goes in the recycling containers. Black sacks get mistaken for rubbish and tipped, so please do not use them for recycling.
- Food waste, cooked or raw, goes in the food bin, because it makes up a big share of what ends up in rubbish.
- Small batteries and small electricals (no bigger than a carrier bag) can go out for recycling in a tied bag. TVs and monitors cannot.
- Large amounts of cardboard should be taken to a recycling centre instead of squeezed into the box.

Plots 97 to 114. The plan shows refuse collection points (marked RCP) serving this group of homes, and the right to put bins there belongs to plots 105 to 107 and 114. If that is you, put bins out there only on collection days and keep the area tidy. If you are in plots 97 to 114 but not one of those, please check with GTH how your bins are collected.

Bigger items. The rule of thumb is simple: if it does not fit inside your bin with the lid closed, it does not go out for collection. Old furniture, mattresses, garden clearances and building rubble do not belong at the kerb or on estate land, so please take them to the tip (the recycling centre). Please also resist the temptation to put your rubbish into the bin of a neighbour or into the communal areas; it comes back to us all in the end, and it is never a good look on the street.

Roads, the croft and the orchard

One of the nicest things about Firepool Lock is the space between the buildings: the green croft opposite plots 79 to 85, the orchard by plot 120, and the landscaped edges along the roads. They are shared, they are looked after through the estate charge, and they are as good as the people who use them make them.

Three requests, in the spirit of "leave it as you would like to find it":

1. **Keep the roads and paths clear, always.** No parking, no skips left overnight, no building materials on the carriageway or footway. If a fire engine or ambulance cannot get through, that is a life-and-death problem, and the Management Company has a duty to keep access open.
2. **Look after the landscaping outside your own front door.** The Management Company can step in if landscaping is not being kept to the original standard, but we would much rather it never came to that.
3. **Treat the croft and orchard as shared, not as an extension of someone's garden.** No fencing, planting, storage or parking, and nothing that makes them feel private.

Quiet enjoyment. The Deed asks that the shared land, which includes the croft, the orchard and the open spaces, is used for quiet enjoyment only: no barbecues, ball games or playing music, no children under ten there without an adult, and any gates closed behind you.

Pets. The Deed does not ban pets, but it does not allow poultry, pigeons or birds of prey, and it asks that no pet fouls or damages the shared land. Dog waste must be picked up, put in a sealed bag and placed in a bin.

If you spot something amiss, such as a broken light, a damaged path, a fallen branch or a car on the verge, tell GTH. Pictures help. If you see something that is dangerous right now, phone the right emergency service first and GTH second.

Asking permission

None of this is meant to stop you improving your home. It is there so that what one neighbour does does not become a problem for the next. The process for asking is simple.

1. Email GTH (property.management@gth.net) with a short description of what you want to do.
2. Attach plans or a sketch showing where and how big, and a few photos of the area as it is now.
3. If your plans go near the yellow-hatched drainage strip, include Wessex Water's consent, or tell us that you are applying for it.
4. We aim to reply in writing within 28 days. Please do not start work until you have heard from us.

Who has to say yes depends on the matter, and honestly it is not always us. For extensions, dishes and aials the Deed names the original developer's consent, and those covenants now stand for the benefit of every owner on the estate, so no single body can simply sign off on everyone's behalf. The Management Company's own role is the shared land, the landscaping standard and the estate regulations. Drainage, planning and building regulations sit with other bodies altogether. Whatever your plans, we will tell you plainly where you stand and what it means for them.

If work goes ahead without permission, you may be asked to put things back as they were, at your own cost, and to cover any enforcement costs we have incurred. We genuinely would rather give you an early "yes, and here is how" than a late "please take it down".

| If your home is rented, or you are selling

Renting your house out. Tenants are welcome here, and a good tenancy starts with a good introduction. As the owner, you are the one bound by the Transfer Deed, so please make sure your tenants know the basics: where their bay is and that visitors cannot park on the estate, how the bins work, no commercial vehicles or caravans, and the importance of keeping roads and shared areas clear. Handing them a copy of this handbook when they move in will cover most of it. The short version for tenants, just below, is written for them.

If you use a letting agent, tell GTH who they are and we can add them to general updates (collection notices, parking changes, works on the estate). They will not see anything financial or private to owners.

For tenants, the short version.

- You have the bay or bays that come with the house, and nowhere else. Visitors park on nearby public streets, not on the estate.
- Bins go out by 7am on collection day and come back in afterwards. Recycling goes in the recycling containers, not in black sacks. Check the council's page for your days.
- Keep roads, verges and the croft clear, and be considerate with noise.
- Anything you would like to change outside the house, even a small thing, needs your landlord to ask for permission first.
- Report problems with the shared parts of the estate to your landlord or agent, or to GTH if it cannot wait.

Selling. If you are selling, let GTH know early. The Deed asks for written notice of the sale (with a reasonable fee), for the buyer to apply to become a member and sign a short deed of covenant with the Management Company, and Land Registry will not register the sale without a certificate from the Management Company confirming this has been done. GTH can help your conveyancer with it. If you have any extensions, outbuildings or hard surfaces, it will help the sale if you can show the permissions you obtained.

Who to call

For	Who	How
Permission requests, shared areas, estate charge, general questions	GTH Property Management (the team)	01823 348899 property.management@gth.net
Parking charge notices, registering tradespeople and health visitors	Link Parking	01935 315494 (option 5 for trades)
Bins, recycling, bulky waste	Somerset Council	0300 123 2224 somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste
Work near the drainage strip	Wessex Water	Speak to GTH first
Fire, flood, or danger to anyone	Emergency services	999

For anything that does not fit, start with GTH. They know who to ask, and they can pass things to the directors when needed.

Lending a hand

The Management Company is run by three volunteer directors, who are appointed by the members in line with the company's articles. We are not actively recruiting at the moment, but if you would like to know how the board works, ask GTH. Meanwhile you can help a great deal by reporting problems early, keeping an eye on your own street, and saying hello to new neighbours.

Thank you for making Firepool Lock a good place to live.