



Living at Firepool Lock: a leaseholder's handbook

A friendly guide for everyone who lives in one of our seven blocks, owner or tenant: how things work here, who does what, and the small habits that keep the place pleasant. It is a neighbourly guide, not the lease itself; if the two ever disagree, the lease wins.

Welcome to Firepool Lock

If you have just moved in, hello, and welcome. If you have been here since the cranes left, thank you for putting up with us. Either way, this little book is meant to save you a few phone calls and the odd awkward conversation on the stairs.

Firepool Lock is 141 homes just by Taunton station: 76 flats in seven blocks (Barnes, Belgravia, Belsize, Mayfair, Pimlico, Primrose and Putney) and 65 houses along Firepool View. Everyone, flat or house, shares the roads, paths, lighting and landscaping, and everyone's service charge keeps them going. It falls due in two halves, on 1 January and 1 July.

Here is who does what, because it does help to know whose door to knock on.

- **The Management Company** (Firepool Lock (Taunton) Management Company Limited) looks after the communal parts: the shared hallways and stairwells, the roads, the gardens, the parking areas and the bin stores. You are a member of it by virtue of owning your flat.
- **The three directors** run the Management Company. We are volunteers: Tim Rigby chairs, with Rob Deville and Ugur Karakus. Tim and Rob each own a flat here, though neither lives on site, so we know what it is like to be an owner relying on good management.
- **GTH Property Management** in Taunton is our managing agent. Their team handles repairs, service charge questions and most things in between. The best way in is the general email, property.management@gth.net, so that your message reaches the whole team and not just one person.
- **The freeholder** is Aviva Investors Ground Rent GP Limited, with Innovus as its asset manager. Some changes to your flat need their consent, which is a little further on.

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.

Parking: one flat, one space

Parking is the thing everyone has an opinion on, so let's start with the plain facts.

Each flat comes with the right to use **one marked, numbered parking space**, shown on the plan that goes with your lease. It is for one private car (up to three tonnes) or motorbike, taxed, insured, roadworthy and parked wholly inside the lines. That is the whole entitlement, with one exception: the three flats shown as plots 50, 51 and 52 in Belsize House have two spaces each. Plot numbers on the plan are not flat numbers, so if you are not sure which plot is yours, ask GTH.

The estate was designed with no general visitor parking, and nothing has changed on the ground since. Visitors need to use the public streets around the station, subject to the council's restrictions. The visitor spaces you may have spotted on the plan are for visitors to a handful of houses (plots 128 to 132), not for the flats or the estate as a whole.

Since 1 April 2026 the bays have been marked and **Link Parking** has patrolled the estate on our behalf, with permits tied to bay numbers. Some things worth knowing:

- Your permit goes with your bay. If you have a visitor staying who needs to use your space while you are away, ask GTH about a visitor permit; it lets them use *your* bay, nobody else's.
- Roads, verges, the croft and open ground are not parking, however handy they look. The entrance road from Station Approach and Trenchard Way needs to stay clear so that a fire engine or ambulance can get in.
- Taxis, vans and other commercial vehicles, caravans, boats and trailers are not allowed on the estate, apart from a delivery or collection that is genuinely short. The lease says so, and it applies to a taxi parked overnight just as much as to a lorry. Commercial vehicle repairs are not allowed either.
- Tradespeople and health visitors coming to your flat need to be registered with Link Parking before they arrive: 01935 315494, option 5.
- A Parking Charge Notice is a matter between you and Link Parking, and the money goes to them. None of it comes to the Management Company, and no service charge money is spent on enforcement. If you think one was issued wrongly, appeal to Link Parking directly.

If you cannot use your space, or something is wrong with the marking, tell GTH rather than parking somewhere "just for tonight". It usually turns out there is a simple fix.

Rubbish and recycling

Nothing divides a building quite like the bin store. A few simple habits keep ours from turning into a tip, and they cost nothing.

Who collects what. Somerset Council empties the bins and collects the recycling. For most households in Somerset that means recycling and food waste every week, though flats with shared collections can differ, so check your own block's days on the [council's collection page](#). The council helpline is 0300 123 2224.

What goes where. Each block has its own bin store. The council's rules on what goes where are simple, and these are the ones it is firmest about:

- Recycling goes in the recycling containers. **Never in black sacks**, which get mistaken for rubbish and tipped.
- Food waste, cooked or raw, goes in the food bin. It is a surprisingly large share of what ends up in the rubbish.
- Large boxes need breaking down. If you have a big pile of cardboard, take it to a recycling centre rather than leaving it by the bins.
- Small batteries and small electricals (no bigger than a carrier bag) can be put out for recycling, in a tied bag. TVs and monitors cannot.

The bin store is for rubbish and nothing else. Your lease only allows refuse, in a proper receptacle, in there. No bags of clothes, no old chair "until the weekend", no bike. Bikes have their own cycle store, which is a much better place for them. Please also shut the door behind you; it keeps the smell in and the pests out.

Bigger items. The rule of thumb is simple: if it does not fit inside the bin with the lid closed, it does not go in the bin store. Sofas, mattresses and the contents of a flat clear-out are not bin store jobs, so please take them to the tip (the recycling centre). If you are moving out or your tenants are, the same applies: whatever you took in, take out. It is a very common reason for a grumpy email to GTH, and it is entirely avoidable.

If a bin store is full, damaged or smelling, tell GTH. We would much rather know than have everyone quietly put up with it.

Shared spaces and fire safety

The hallways and stairwells are everyone's way out of the building. That is the whole reason we ask for them to be clear, and it is the one area where we will not be relaxed about things.

So, outside your front door and on the stairs: **nothing**. No doormats, shoes, pushchairs, bikes, plant pots or "temporary" boxes. All of it lives inside your flat, or in the cycle store if it has wheels. This applies to owners, landlords and tenants alike, and a small item that has sat there for months counts exactly the same as a big one.

The reason is not fussiness. The Management Company is legally the "responsible person" for the communal parts under fire safety law, and a blocked escape route is something we have to deal with straight away. A pushchair under the stairs is a nuisance on a Tuesday and a serious problem if the alarm goes off at 3am.

Fire doors. Your flat's front door is a fire door, which is why it closes by itself and why you should not prop it open or swap it for something prettier without asking. Doors are being checked across the blocks by a specialist surveyor, and the communal fire doors are inspected regularly. Belsize House is taller than 11 metres, so extra rules apply there under the Building Safety Act, including checks on flat entrance doors. If we ask to come in and look at yours, it is a legal duty on our side and a ten-minute job on yours.

Damp, leaks and the windows. Crest Nicholson, the original builder, has been carrying out remedial work on water getting in around windows in six of the blocks, with Belsize's basement dealt with separately. If you notice damp, staining or a window that is not shedding water properly, tell GTH and take a photo. Please do not pay for your own fix before checking; it may well be a building defect rather than your responsibility.

Communal gardens and common parts. They are there to be enjoyed quietly. Please leave them as you would like to find them, and report damage, broken lights or anything that looks unsafe to GTH as soon as you see it.

Storage cages. If your flat has a basement storage cage, it is for private household items, kept at your own risk. The lease does not allow animals in it, flammable or explosive items, commercial storage, or any change to the cage itself.

Your flat: changes, repairs and asking first

You hold a 125-year lease on your flat, so it is yours to live in and look after. Most of what you do inside needs no one's blessing. A few things do, and it is far cheaper to ask first than to undo something afterwards.

Ask before you:

- Alter the inside in a way that goes beyond decorating, such as moving walls or doing anything that touches the structure. The Lessor's consent is needed, and there may be a fee.
- Change anything on the outside: windows, front doors, balcony fittings, paintwork, cladding. The look of the buildings is a shared asset, and these need the Lessor's consent.
- Lay hard flooring without checking first. The lease requires carpet and underfelt, or a sound-absorbing layer under hard flooring, so that footsteps do not travel downstairs.
- Do anything that might push up the building insurance or put it at risk. If in doubt, ask.

Not even with permission. Satellite dishes, aerials, window boxes, flower pots, sun blinds and washing may not be displayed from your windows or balcony, and barbecues are out everywhere, balconies included. There is a communal TV system, so a dish should not be needed.

Electric vehicle chargers. We know this is not the answer many of you want. At present the Lessor has not agreed to EV charging equipment at the flats, because of safety and structural concerns. If that changes we will tell you straight away, and in the meantime Taunton's public chargers are the practical option.

How to ask. Email GTH with a short description of what you want to do, a drawing or sketch if it helps, and a photo of the area as it is now. We aim to reply within 28 days. If the Lessor has to be involved, GTH will guide you through it.

Repairs. Inside your flat is your responsibility. If a repair inside is left unattended and starts to affect a neighbour or the building, the lease allows the Lessor to step in after 30 days' notice and recover the cost. It rarely comes to that, and a quick call to GTH usually sorts out who should do what.

Balconies and terraces are for quiet enjoyment. Please keep them tidy, with no barbecues (the lease bans them on balconies as well as in the gardens), nothing hung over the edge and nothing that could fall, blow away or annoy the neighbours above and below. Keeping the balcony floor clean and free of dead plants is your job.

And if you do make a change without permission, you may be asked to put it back at your own cost, along with any costs we have run up. We would far rather have the conversation first.

Being a good neighbour

We live closer together than most people do, and the blocks carry sound further than you would think. Nobody expects silence, since there is a railway station on the doorstep and this is a home, not a library. What helps is thinking about who is on the other side of the wall.

A few things that make a difference:

- Keep music, television and DIY to sensible hours. The lease is specific that nothing musical should be audible outside your flat between 11pm and 9am, and a heads-up to the neighbours before anything noisy goes a long way.
- Close the communal doors gently, especially late at night.
- The lease treats serious or repeated nuisance as a breach, but nearly every problem here is settled with a friendly word long before it gets that far.

The communal gardens are for quiet recreation: a book, a coffee, a stroll. Barbecues, ball games and loud music are not allowed there, and children under ten need an adult with them. It is partly about noise and partly about the shared lawns surviving the summer.

Pets. The lease says no dog, cat, bird or other animal or reptile may be kept in a flat without the Management Company's prior written consent. Consent cannot be unreasonably withheld or delayed, but it can be withdrawn if a pet causes a nuisance or annoyance. So please ask GTH before a new pet moves in, and do clear up after your dog anywhere on the estate.

If something is bothering you, speak to the neighbour first if you feel comfortable doing so; they may not know. If that does not work, or you would rather not, tell GTH and we will look at it. Please give dates, times and what you heard or saw, as that helps us act fairly.

And if you are the one who gets the knock at the door: assume good intentions, say sorry, and fix it. That is nearly always the end of the matter.

If your flat is rented

A good share of Firepool Lock is rented, and tenants are a big part of the community here. We just want them to start on the right foot, which is why this handbook is written so that it can be passed on.

For landlords. The lease makes you responsible for how your flat is used, including making sure those living there follow the estate's rules. That is true whether you manage the flat yourself or through an agent, and agents do not always pass things on. The simplest fix is a five-minute chat at the start of a tenancy and a copy of this handbook in the welcome pack. It will save you a good many awkward emails.

A few points from the lease that landlords sometimes miss. Letting the whole flat on an ordinary tenancy agreement does not need the Lessor's consent, though letting part of it does. You must tell the Management Company and the Lessor within a month, with your own permanent address, and the lease expects a reasonable fee for registering it. The flat must be a private home for a single household, with no trade or business run from it and no For Sale or To Let boards. Pets need the Management Company's consent too, so your tenants' pets are your business as well. Only one parking space comes with the flat (the three flats on plots 50, 51 and 52 have two), so a second car or a work van cannot simply be added, and taxis, vans and other commercial vehicles are not permitted on the estate, including overnight.

If you would like your letting agent to receive our general updates (maintenance, parking changes, collection notices and the like), let GTH know their details. Agents never see financial or leaseholder-only information. We do not collect tenants' contact details.

For tenants: the short version.

- Your landlord's lease sets the rules, and they are really just common sense: be considerate, keep noise sensible, keep corridors and stairs clear.
- You have the parking space that comes with your flat (one, or two for the three flats on plots 50 to 52), and nowhere else. Visitors cannot use other spaces; they park on nearby public streets.
- Rubbish and recycling go in the bin store, and the bin store is for nothing else. Please check the [council's collection page](#) for your block's days and take anything too big to fit in the bin to the tip.
- Report problems to your landlord or letting agent first. If it affects the shared parts of the building, such as a broken light, a leak or a blocked escape route, GTH will want to hear about it directly.
- When you move out, leave the parking space and bin store as you found them, and tell your landlord in good time so they can let GTH know.

Welcome to Taunton, and to the neighbourhood.

Moving in, moving out, selling

Arriving. Welcome, and thank you for reading this far. Tell GTH you have arrived and check they have your correct contact details, as that is how notices and safety updates reach you. If you are a new owner, your solicitor should already have been in touch with GTH. Ask GTH how to get into Blocks Online, their portal for your service charge account and documents.

Then walk down to the bin store and the cycle store and see where things are. It is much easier than learning by mistake on your second day.

Leaving. Whether you are selling or your tenants are moving on, a few small things keep the departure tidy:

- Tell GTH as early as you can, so there are no surprises at either end.
- Take everything with you, including anything you have stored in the bin store, cycle store or around your parking space. Leftovers get noticed, and someone has to pay to clear them, which ultimately means all of us through the service charge.
- Make sure your parking permit and any visitor permits are sorted out with GTH, so they do not carry on after you have gone.

Selling. The buyer signs up to the lease covenants directly with the Lessor and the Management Company and applies to join the Management Company. You give both written notice within a month after the sale, with the documents and a reasonable fee,

and Land Registry will not register the sale without a certificate from the Management Company confirming the lease requirements have been met. Your conveyancer will know the drill, but it speeds things up if GTH hears early.

Letting for the first time? Take a look at the landlord section above. A copy of this handbook for your tenants will help them settle in quickly.

Who to call

For	Who	How
Repairs to shared areas, service 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
Consent for changes to your flat	GTH, who will take it to the Lessor	Email GTH with your plans and photos
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 block, and saying hello to new neighbours.

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