



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Estate Services and Communal Areas Policy (Housing)

[Including Tenant-Exclusive Outdoor Space, such as gardens, yards and balconies]

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) aims to deliver safe, clean, accessible and well-managed estates across all housing stock. This policy provides a comprehensive framework for managing communal areas, external environments and resident responsibilities, strengthening clarity and alignment with regulatory requirements.

2. Scope and purpose

- 2.1 This policy applies to all council housing, including sheltered housing and land owned and managed by SCDC. It includes leasehold properties but excludes homes managed by Ermine Street Housing or Shire Homes Lettings, land managed by external management companies as part of wider housing developments, and council-owned graveyards and allotments.
- 2.2 It sets out the estate management services provided by SCDC and defines the respective responsibilities for maintaining internal communal areas, external communal spaces, and external areas designated for the exclusive use of individual households. It establishes clear expectations for inspections, supports compliance with relevant legislation, and promotes the development of safe, well-maintained, and sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 2.3 This policy aims to:
- Ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities.
 - Maintain robust inspection regimes
 - Support resident involvement.
 - Provide transparent enforcement approaches.
 - Ensure safeguarding health, safety and wellbeing within communal environments.
- 2.4 The purpose of this policy is to ensure tenants live in safe, well-maintained environments.



3. Regulatory Requirements

- 3.1 The Council is required to manage and maintain estate services, communal areas and associated land in accordance with relevant housing, health and safety and regulatory legislation.
- 3.2 This includes compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards, particularly the Safety and Quality Standard and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which require shared spaces to be safe, well-maintained and properly managed.
- 3.3 Where conditions in communal areas, estate land or tenant gardens present a risk to residents' health or safety, the Council must act in line with the Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). In certain circumstances, Awaab's Law may also apply where hazards for which the Council is responsible pose a risk of harm to residents.
- 3.4 The Council must also meet its duties under wider health and safety, fire safety and occupiers' liability legislation, taking reasonable steps to prevent harm to residents, visitors and others using shared and external spaces.
- 3.5 The Council must also comply with wider health, safety and building safety legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022, where applicable. These requirements apply to communal areas, estate land and external spaces under the Council's control and require the Council to take reasonable and proportionate steps to identify, manage and reduce risks, including fire, structural and access-related hazards, to protect residents, visitors, staff and others lawfully using those areas.



4. Definitions of Communal Areas and Tenant-Exclusive Outdoor Space

- a) **Public Areas** – external spaces owned by SCDL and accessible to all, including public footpaths, verges and grassed areas.
- b) **Communal Areas (External)** – shared external spaces accessed only by residents, such as drying areas, shared gardens or courtyards in sheltered schemes.
- c) **Communal Areas (Internal)** – indoor shared circulation spaces including corridors, stairways, lifts, communal entrances, meter cupboards and bin chutes.
- d) **Tenant-Exclusive Outdoor Space** – gardens, yards and external spaces, such as balconies, for exclusive use by individual tenants included within the tenancy.
- e) **Communal Rooms** – sheltered housing communal rooms designated for resident activities, meetings, wellbeing events and social programmes; usage is restricted to residents unless authorised.
- f) **Parking Areas** – designated bays, communal car parks and forecourts.



5. Public Areas (External) – Estate Inspections

- 5.1 SCDC manages a structured inspection framework that includes general visual checks, formal resident inspections of public areas and targeted risk-led inspections for high-risk areas.
- 5.2 Estate inspections are designed to identify and address a wide range of issues, including:
- Repairs and maintenance needs
 - Condition and cleanliness of external communal areas
 - Grounds maintenance standards
 - Health and safety hazards, Fly-tipping, graffiti and environmental concerns
 - Anti-social behaviour indicators

General Visual Checks

- 5.3 Housing Services Officers carry out regular visual checks within their allocated areas as part of their day-to-day duties. Any issues identified are recorded, actioned, and followed up as appropriate. Where higher safety risks or operational concerns are identified, the frequency of visits will be increased. Contractors carrying out grounds maintenance work will also report any issues identified during routine maintenance visits as part of a planned programme, which will be recorded and followed up by Housing Services Officers.
- 5.4 SCDC footpaths are checked as part of the visual checks outlined as 5.3, and are included as criteria within the formal inspection process. Any hazards, including trip hazards, are recorded and are to be reported within 48 hours.

Formal Resident Inspections

- 5.5 In addition to the routine visits, formal resident-involved inspections will be conducted annually in each housing area patch. A minimum of two formal estate inspections will be conducted each month, typically between April and



October and consisting of 14 inspections in total, together with tenant/leaseholder volunteers. These inspections provide an opportunity for residents to raise concerns, suggest improvements and collaborate with officers to enhance their local environment. Formal inspections will count toward the routine visual checks.

- 5.6 To encourage transparency and resident involvement, the Council publish an annual calendar of formal resident inspections, including dates and locations. This calendar is made available through the Council's website and tenant newsletters.

Reporting and Follow Up

- 5.7 SCDC will ensure that concerns relating to estate services, communal areas and tenant-exclusive external spaces can be reported easily and are responded to proportionately. All reported issues will be assessed having regard to risk, the Council's responsibilities and any potential impact on residents' health or safety, with hazards addressed in line with relevant statutory duties, including Awaab's Law where applicable. The Council will keep appropriate records of issues raised and actions taken, implement interim measures where necessary, and provide updates where issues affect safety or take time to resolve. Tenant satisfaction with the upkeep of communal areas will be monitored through the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) reports, with performance and trends subject to scrutiny and oversight through the Housing Engagement Board and reported to Cabinet as part of the Council's housing governance arrangements.

6. Communal areas (Internal)

- 6.1 SCDC enforces a zero-tolerance approach to storing personal belongings in internal communal areas due to fire, trip and access risks, aligning with fire safety legislation.
- 6.2 Communal areas must always remain unobstructed to enable safe evacuation and unimpeded access by emergency services. Only items provided by SCDC for specific functions are permitted.



- 6.3 Elm Court operates under a managed-use approach due to its layout and Fire Risk Assessment, permitting limited items such as door mats and plants in strict compliance with guidance.
- 6.4 Examples of items that are not allowed to be stored or left in internal communal areas are shown in the Appendix 1.
- 6.5 The Council may remove any item which, in the Council's opinion, poses a safety, fire, access or environmental risk. Items may be removed immediately if high-risk or following reasonable notice where appropriate.
- 6.6 As a minimum, internal communal areas will be formally inspected on a quarterly basis by Housing Services Officers (HSOs). In sheltered housing schemes, inspections will be carried out weekly by Sheltered Estate Officers (SEOs) to reflect the increased vulnerability of residents, higher levels of use of communal facilities, and the need for closer oversight to manage health, safety and wellbeing risks. In addition to formal inspections, officers will undertake routine, informal observations during day-to-day activities. Where issues are identified, these will be recorded, supported by evidence where appropriate, and the area revisited to confirm that remedial action has been completed. All inspections, observations and follow-up actions will be recorded, and any hazards identified will be reported and escalated within 24 hours.
- 6.7 Please also reference our [Fire Risk Policy](#).

7. Communal Rooms in Sheltered Housing

- 7.1 SCDC owns and maintains 40 communal rooms across the district. These buildings can be used by all sheltered housing residents and are often used for community activities such as coffee mornings, bingo and other social activities which can include other members of the public.
- 7.2 Items that are available for use, or are being stored at a communal room, should only be those that have been provided by SCDC. Residents are not permitted to store any items at the building.



Any items brought in for specific activities should be removed after the event has finished, unless written permission has been given by SCDC.

- 7.3 All Items located within communal rooms, including furniture, soft furnishings and electrical equipment, will comply with safety regulations, such as fire safety standards. Electrical items will be Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) in accordance with statutory requirements to ensure compliance and maintain safety standards.
- 7.4 Residents are not permitted to use appliances (for example deep fat fryers, air fryers) in the communal areas other than those provided by SCDC.
- 7.5 SCDC also provide and maintain bulletin/notice boards at communal rooms; residents can speak with their Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO) if they would like to add anything to it.
- 7.6 Residents must behave respectfully and not engage in harassment, aggression, or behaviour that puts others at risk. SCDC operate a zero-tolerance approach. SCDC reserves the right to withdraw access (temporarily or permanently) to communal rooms in cases of persistent ASB or where safety is compromised.
- 7.7 The Council may remove any item which, in the Council's opinion, poses a safety, fire, access or environmental risk. Items may be removed immediately if high-risk or following reasonable notice where appropriate.
- 7.8 Communal rooms will be inspected weekly by Sheltered Estate Officers (SEOs). All inspections will be recorded and hazards reported within 24 hours.
- 7.9 Please also see the Councils [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#).

8. Communal Areas (External)

- 8.1 Communal gardens, paths and parking areas that are the responsibility of SCDC must remain clear, with disabled bays reserved for Blue Badge holders. EV charging cables must not be trailed across communal paths and require formal approval for installation of charging solutions.



- 8.2 Barbeques are not permitted in any of SCDC's communal garden areas. The use of BBQs for community events may be approved following submission of an event risk assessment to the Housing Services Team.
- 8.3 Camping and campfires are prohibited on any of SCDC's communal areas.
- 8.4 The Council may remove any item which, in the Council's opinion, poses a safety, fire, access or environmental risk. Items may be removed immediately if high-risk or following reasonable notice where appropriate.
- 8.5 Regular visual checks will be carried out on communal areas within general needs housing by Housing Officers as part of their day-to-day duties. Any issues identified will be recorded, actioned, and followed up as appropriate. Where higher safety risks or operational concerns are identified, the frequency of visits will be increased. Contractors carrying out grounds maintenance work will also report any issues identified during routine maintenance visits as part of a planned programme, which will be recorded and followed up by Housing Services Officers.
- 8.6 Sheltered housing schemes receive additional oversight from the Sheltered Estate Officers (SEO's) who undertake weekly visits, monthly compliance checks and continuous engagement with residents to identify emerging issues.
- 8.7 In both General Needs and Sheltered Accommodation, all inspections, observations and follow-up actions will be recorded, and any hazards identified will be reported and escalated within 24 hours.

9. Parking Areas

- 9.1 Car parks are intended for residents and their visitors, and are provided on a first come, first served basis. Residents must park responsibly and considerately and not block emergency access.
- 9.2 Parking is not allowed on grassed areas, whether this be within the curtilage of a property or on the verge outside. Vehicles must be parked on hardstanding (a driveway or paved area that is intended for parking).



- 9.3 Standard work vans used for employment by residents are permitted where they do not cause nuisance, obstruction, or safety concerns. Larger commercial vehicles (HGVs, coaches, oversized vans) require written permission from SCDC.
- 9.4 Caravans or motor homes must not be parked on the garden, driveway, paved or grassed area around a property or on any communal parking areas without the council's agreement in writing.
- 9.5 Other parking limitations include:
- Residents and visitors must not park anywhere that would obstruct emergency services.
 - No illegal, unroadworthy, uninsured or untaxed vehicles should be parked or repaired in parking areas, unless SCDC have provided permission and the timescales involved in making the vehicle roadworthy are agreed.
 - No hard standing should be made, or vehicular access created without the council's written permission. Planning Permission may also be required.
 - Vehicles must not be abandoned on council property.
- 9.6 Any instances where the above requirements are not being met must be recorded during estate inspections and followed up by the Housing Services Officer (HSO). Suspected abandoned vehicles must be reported to the Housing Enforcement Team (HET), who will liaise with the relevant authorities or departments to confirm whether the vehicle is abandoned and take appropriate action to resolve the matter.
- 9.7 Residents are not permitted to trail charging cables across footpaths or communal land due to trip and electrical hazards. Permission for EV charging solutions must be requested in writing.
- 9.8 Only minor car maintenance tasks such as changing a wheel, topping up oil or water are permitted.
- 9.9 Barbeques are not permitted in any of SCDC's parking areas.



- 9.10 Camping and campfires are prohibited on any of SCDC's parking areas.
- 9.11 The Council may remove any item which, in the Council's opinion, poses a safety, fire, access or environmental risk. Items may be removed immediately if high-risk, or following reasonable notice where appropriate
- 9.12 Parking areas will be inspected quarterly by HSOs/SEO. All inspections will be recorded and hazards reported within 24 hours.

10. Tenant-Exclusive Outdoor Space

- 10.1 This section covers external spaces that are for the exclusive use of individual households, such as individual gardens, yards, patios, sheds, and any outdoor space that forms part of an individual tenancy and is not shared with other residents. Tenants are responsible for maintaining these areas in a clean, safe and tidy condition in accordance with their tenancy agreement.

Standards for Maintenance

- 10.2 Tenants must ensure that exclusive-use external areas are maintained to a reasonable standard, including:
- Keeping grass, hedges, and plants trimmed so they do not become overgrown or encroach onto footpaths, neighbouring properties, or communal land.
 - Removing litter, household waste, bulky waste and unwanted items promptly,
 - Ensuring waste is not stored in gardens or left where it can cause nuisance, harbour pests, or present a fire or safety hazard.
 - Keeping areas free from hazards including loose paving, exposed nails, sharp objects, or unsafe structures.
 - Maintaining boundaries, such as small fences and gates, where these are the tenant's responsibility under the tenancy agreement.



- 10.3 Where the condition of a garden falls below acceptable standards, SCDC may issue warnings, request improvements within a set timeframe, or take enforcement action where necessary.

Restrictions in Tenant- Exclusive Outdoor Spaces

- 10.4 To ensure safety, visual standards and neighbourhood cohesion, the following restrictions apply:
- Barbecues are permitted only in individual gardens of houses and bungalows and must be used and stored safely in accordance with manufacturer guidance. Gas cylinders must be stored outdoors at least 5 metres from the property.
 - EV charging cables must not be trailed across public footpaths or communal land. Installation of home charging solutions requires written permission from SCDC.
 - Bonfires and burning of waste are not permitted due to nuisance, air quality concerns, and risk of fire.
 - Storage of flammable liquids, gas cylinders (other than BBQ use), or hazardous chemicals is not permitted unless stored safely and in small domestic quantities.
 - Large structures, including sheds, greenhouses, and summerhouses, require written permission before installation and may require planning consent.

Trees and Hedges in Individual Gardens

- 10.5 Tenants are responsible for routine maintenance of trees and hedges within their garden. SCDC will only consider undertaking works where:
- The tree presents a significant health and safety risk; and
 - The tenant is unable to carry out the work due to disability, age, or vulnerability, and
 - There is no family or informal support available.



- Requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by relevant officers.

Pets and Animals

10.6 Where tenants are permitted to keep pets under the tenancy agreement, they must ensure:

- Faeces are promptly removed from the garden.
- Animals do not cause unreasonable noise, odour, or hygiene issues.
- Animal housing (hutches, aviaries, runs) are kept clean, safe, and positioned appropriately.

10.7 SCDC may intervene if pet-related issues cause nuisance or health concerns.

10.8 Please see the Council Pet Policy for further details.

Items Not Permitted in Individual Gardens

10.9 The following items must not be kept in gardens:

- Household furniture not designed for outdoor use
- White goods (fridges, freezers, washing machines)
- Car parts, scrap metal, builders' waste or trade materials
- Flammable or explosive items (other than small domestic quantities)
- Tents, camping equipment left long-term, or temporary living structures

10.10 Where such items are identified, SCDC may serve notice requiring removal or act under tenancy enforcement powers.

Support for Vulnerable Residents

10.11 SCDC recognises that some tenants may be unable to maintain their gardens due to age, disability, or health conditions.

10.12 Eligible tenants may be able to access:

- the Welfare (Assisted) Grass-Cutting Service



- Referrals to support agencies
- Reasonable adjustments where applicable

10.13 Eligibility is assessed in line with the criteria set out in the Assisted Gardening Scheme and listed at Appendix 2.

11. Removal of Items

11.1 SCDC aims to take a fair, proportionate and transparent approach when items are found in communal areas that do not comply with this policy. Wherever possible, Housing staff will seek to engage with residents before taking enforcement action.

Removal of items with resident engagement

11.2 Where a non-permissible item is identified and Housing staff can contact the owner, the resident will be asked to remove the item immediately. If the resident complies, the removal will take place straight away with no further action required.

Removal of items with Notice

11.3 This section applies to communal rooms, Public Areas, Communal Areas (Internal), Communal Areas (External) and Parking Areas.

11.4 Where a non-permissible item is identified and presents minimal risk, SCDC will take appropriate action to ensure its removal while maintaining fairness and transparency. This process applies where:

- The owner of the item cannot be identified or contacted at the time of inspection.
- The owner is unable to remove the item immediately but has agreed to do so within a reasonable timeframe.
- The owner refuses to remove the item upon request.

11.5 In such cases SCDC will issue a Miscellaneous Provisions Notice (MPN), under Section 41 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. Where the owner is known, the Notice will be issued directly to them. If



the owner is unknown, the Notice will be affixed to the item or placed nearby in a clearly visible location.

- 11.6 The Notice will specify a timeframe for removal, which may range from 48 hours to two weeks, depending on the nature of the item and the associated risk. If the item remains in place beyond the stated deadline, SCDC will arrange for its removal to uphold safety standards and ensure communal areas remain accessible to all residents. SCDC may also charge the owner of the item(s) for the costs of the removal where appropriate.
- 11.7 Items assessed as medium or high risk may be removed immediately without prior notice in the interests of safety. These items may be stored temporarily.

Storage of items following removal.

- 11.8 Following the removal of non-compliant items from communal areas, SCDC will determine appropriate storage or disposal actions based on the assessed value and risk associated with each item:
- a. Items of no apparent value (e.g. discarded packaging, empty boxes) will be disposed of immediately and will not be retained.
 - b. Items of low value will be stored for a period of up to one month to allow for potential reclamation by the owner.
 - c. Items perceived to be of higher value or potential sentimental significance will be stored for a minimum period of six months, during which reasonable efforts will be made to identify and contact the owner.
 - d. Where the owner of a non-compliant item is identified, SCDC reserves the right to recharge the resident for any costs incurred in the removal, storage, or disposal of the item. SCDC accepts no liability for any damage or loss once the item has been removed from the premises.
- 11.9 In accordance with Section 41 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, if an item remains unclaimed after serving written Notice, legal ownership of the item will transfer to



SCDC. Once ownership is transferred, the Council may proceed with disposal through one of the following methods:

- Sale - Donation to a recognised charitable organisation
- Recycling - Disposal of items through approved recycling facilities or services
- Destruction – Disposal of items where no other method is suitable

11.10 This process ensures that communal areas remain safe and accessible, while providing a fair and legally compliant approach to the handling of abandoned or non-permitted items.

12. Grounds Maintenance and Trees

- 12.1 SCDC fulfils its obligations under the Environment Act 2021 by managing communal land in a way that enhances biodiversity, protects natural habitats, and promotes nature recovery. All grounds maintenance activities are carried out with consideration for ecological impact and the Council's wider environmental objectives.
- 12.2 SCDC delivers grounds maintenance through planned, cyclical and reactive activities. This includes grass cutting, hedge maintenance, rough cuts, weed spraying and ditch management.
- 12.3 Planned grass cutting occurs up to 12 times per year. Rough cuts balance biodiversity objectives with safety considerations. Weed spraying is limited to minimal circumference applications to reduce visual impact.
- 12.4 Trees in communal areas are maintained based on risk and condition. Trees in tenants' gardens are addressed only when presenting a significant hazard and where the tenant cannot manage due to incapacity.
- 12.5 Ditch clearance occurs annually with environmentally responsible disposal. Biodiversity initiatives support the Council's Doubling Nature goals, including wildflower planting and reduced mowing in specific areas.
- 12.6 Further details of the current ground maintenance regime can be found in Appendix 2.



13. Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

- 13.1 ASB negatively impacts safety, wellbeing and the enjoyment of communal environments. Examples include misuse of communal areas, environmental crimes, deliberate obstruction parking, noise nuisance and vandalism.
- 13.2 SCDC's Enforcement Team applies a professional, proportionate and evidence-based approach to addressing ASB, working with partner agencies, safeguarding leads and community support teams where appropriate.
- 13.3 Persistent misuse of communal rooms or unsafe behaviour may result in restricted access to protect residents.

14. Tenant Community Grants

- 14.1 The Tenant Community Grant scheme supports resident-led initiatives aimed at improving communal areas, promoting wellbeing and strengthening local community cohesion.
- 14.2 Projects may include planting schemes, indoor activity equipment, communal room enhancements or events promoting inclusion. Funding up to £1,000 is available, with support provided by the Resident Involvement Team.

15. Accessibility and inclusion

- 15.1 SCDC is committed to engaging with tenants and residents in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure services are accessible to all. This may include:
 - Contact preferences
 - Offering home visits
 - Use of advocates or interpreters
 - Alternative communication formats, such as large print or translated materials
 - Adjusting appointment times
 - Adjusting locations to accommodate mobility or health needs



16. About this policy

- 16.1 This policy will be reviewed every 5 years. However, earlier reassessment may be required following tenant feedback, further guidance or where there are changes in operations and/or legislation.
- 16.2 This policy has been produced in consultation with tenant representatives. If a tenant is interested in getting involved in shaping the housing service, further information is available on the [website](#), or contact resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk.



17. Service requests and complaints process

- 17.1 A tenant should report initial service requests, such as repairs or safety concerns, through the designated channels:

Repairs: **Online** via the Council's [website](#).
By phone via the Repairs Hotline: 0800 085 1313
Through the **M&Me** Mobile App

General Queries: Tel: 01954 713 000
E-mail duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk

- 17.2 The [Communications Charter for tenants and leaseholders](#) sets out detailed guidance on how to contact the Council and the service standards that can be expected in relation to communication and responsiveness.
- 17.3 SCDC aims to provide excellent customer service but recognise that mistakes can happen. If a tenant is dissatisfied with the service received following a service request, they can make a complaint in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy. To make a complaint, visit our [website](#) or telephone 01954 713000 or email housing.complaints@scambs.gov.uk.



18. Our values

Ambitious

- We are proactive and take a forward-thinking approach to addressing challenges.
- We create smart solutions and reach our goals with determination and a clear vision.

Collaborative

- We foster a culture of teamwork and open communication.
- We work with and involve stakeholders, to improve how the organisation works and serves the public.

Compassionate

- We prioritise empathy and understanding in decision-making and service delivery.
- We consider the wellbeing of people and communities in everything we do and we replicate this when we talk to our colleagues because we know that when we support each other, we all do better.

Accountable

- We take responsibility for our actions and decisions.
- We own up to mistakes and make sure we fulfil our commitments.



Glossary of Terms

Abandoned Vehicle

A vehicle left on Council land without valid tax, MOT, insurance or clear ownership, or which has the appearance of permanent neglect. These are managed in accordance with abandoned vehicle legislation.

Accessible Communication

Any communication method adapted to meet individual needs, including large print, Easy Read, audio, Braille, translation, interpretation, or digital formats.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Behaviour capable of causing nuisance, alarm, harassment, distress or annoyance to others. Includes noise, vandalism, misuse of communal areas, intimidation, or environmental offences.

Assisted Gardening Scheme

A scheme providing support such as welfare (assisted) grass-cutting for eligible residents who are unable to maintain gardens due to age, disability or vulnerability.

Car Hardstanding

A paved or concreted area designed and permitted for vehicle parking. Not all paved areas count as authorised hardstanding.

Communal Areas/Spaces (External)

Outdoor shared spaces accessible only to residents, such as communal gardens, drying areas, courtyards, bin stores, and shared access paths.

Communal Areas (Internal)

Indoor shared spaces including corridors, stairwells, foyers, lifts, bin chutes, risers, meter cupboards, and fire escape routes.

Communal Rooms

Sheltered housing rooms used for social activities, meetings, and wellbeing events. Managed and inspected by Sheltered Estate Officers.



Compliance Checks

Scheduled inspections carried out to ensure statutory and safety requirements are met.

Consumer Standards

Regulatory standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing covering: Safety and Quality Standard, Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

Council Land/Council Property

Land, buildings or communal spaces owned or managed by South Cambridgeshire District Council for housing purposes.

Designated Parking Area

A marked or approved parking bay or communal car park where vehicles are permitted to park.

Ditch Clearance

Annual cutting and clearing of estate ditches to ensure water flow and maintain environmental standards.

Doubling Nature

The Council's initiative to enhance biodiversity through wildflower planting, reduced mowing, habitat creation and sustainable grounds maintenance practices.

Estate Inspection (General Term)

Any inspection of public, communal or tenant-exclusive outdoor areas to identify hazards, maintenance needs, safety concerns or tenancy breaches.

Event Risk Assessment

A risk assessment required for certain activities in communal areas, such as community BBQs, to ensure safety and compliance.

EV Charging Cable / EV Charging Solution

Any cable, charger or fitted equipment used for charging an electric vehicle. Trailing cables across communal areas are prohibited; installed chargers require written SCDC approval.

**Fire Loading**

The amount of combustible material (e.g., furniture, cardboard, fabrics) stored in an area that increases fire spread risk.

Formal Resident Inspection

A scheduled estate inspection involving residents, officers and (optionally) partner agencies, usually conducted annually.

Footpaths (SCDC owned)

Public or estate pathways inspected at least once per year for defects or hazards.

General Needs Housing

Housing provided by the council, without specialist support or care services.

Grounds Maintenance

Routine care of grass, hedges, trees, ditches and planted areas delivered on cyclical, planned or reactive schedules.

Hazard

A condition that may cause harm, such as a trip hazard, fire risk, obstruction, or defective surface.

Head of Housing

The Senior Officer responsible for policy ownership and oversight of housing operations.

High-Risk Item

Any item that poses a significant safety, fire or access hazard, which may be removed immediately without notice.

Housing Enforcement Team (HET)

The Council team responsible for investigating abandoned vehicles, tenancy breaches and enforcement matters.

Housing Services Officer (HSO)

The officer responsible for estate inspections, tenancy management, and addressing breaches of tenancy or estate standards.

Leaf Clearance

Removal of fallen leaves only where they present a slip hazard or obstruct access.



Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Section 41

The legal power used by SCDC to issue Notices and remove items from communal areas after a defined period or immediately if they pose a safety risk.

Managed Use Scheme

A scheme (e.g. Elm Court) where, due to fire risk assessment, a small number of low-risk items may be allowed in communal areas under controlled conditions.

Miscellaneous Provisions Notice (MPN)

A notice issued under Section 41 of the 1982 Act requiring removal of items from communal areas within a set timeframe.

Monthly Compliance Checks

Regular checks at sheltered schemes to verify fire safety, equipment condition and adherence to regulations.

Overgrown Garden / Untidy Garden

A tenant's garden that has become unsafe, unsightly or unmanaged, potentially causing nuisance, pest harbourage, obstruction or breaches of tenancy.

Parking Area

A communal or designated space where residents may park vehicles in accordance with policy, excluding grassed verges or unauthorised paved areas.

Pet Policy

The Council's policy outlining requirements and permissions for keeping animals in Council properties.

Planned, Cyclical and Reactive Work

- *Planned*: Scheduled maintenance tasks
- *Cyclical*: Activities carried out at predictable intervals
- *Reactive*: Responses to reported issues or emerging risks

Tenant-Exclusive Outdoor Space/Area

Gardens, yards, patios, balconies and other outdoor areas solely within an individual tenant's boundary.

Reasonable Adjustments

Changes or support provided to ensure tenants with disabilities or vulnerabilities can access services or meet obligations.



Recharge

A cost recovered from a resident where the Council incurs expenses for removal, storage or disposal of items or damage attributable to that resident.

Reactive Work

Maintenance or safety actions triggered by reports or emerging issues.

Riser / Meter Cupboard

Shared service cupboard containing utilities such as electric meters or pipework. These must remain free from stored items.

Risk-Led Inspection

A targeted inspection prioritising areas with known issues, elevated fire risk, recurrent ASB, or health and safety concerns.

Rough Cuts

Less frequent grass cuts to maintain biodiversity in peripheral areas while preventing overgrowth.

Safety and Quality Standard

A regulatory standard requiring landlords to provide safe, good-quality homes through effective repairs and maintenance.

Service Manager – Tenancy & Estates

The Officer responsible for operational oversight of tenancy and estate management services.

Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO)

Officer responsible for regular inspections, wellbeing monitoring and tenancy support within sheltered housing schemes.

Sheltered Housing

Housing for older people or others requiring additional support, with enhanced management and communal facilities.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

National performance indicators required by the Regulator of Social Housing, covering safety, repairs, neighbourhood management and engagement.



Tree Maintenance

Works carried out by SCDC contractors on communal land based on risk and condition.

Trip Hazard

Any defect or obstruction such as uneven paving, trailing cables, raised slabs or debris that could cause a person to fall.

Untaxed / Unroadworthy Vehicle

A vehicle not meeting legal requirements to be used or kept on public land. These must not be stored or repaired on Council property.

Vehicular Access

Any created or modified access point to enable vehicle parking; requires written SCDC permission and may require planning consent.

Weed Spraying

Annual application of weed control chemicals around street furniture and hardstanding areas, limited to defined perimeters.

Welfare (Assisted) Grass Cuts

Five grass cuts per year for eligible tenants unable to maintain gardens due to age, disability or health conditions.

Wildflower Areas

Designated planting areas promoting biodiversity as part of the Council's environmental commitments.



Appendix 1 - Prohibited Items in Internal Communal Areas

The following items are examples of items that must not be stored, left, or placed in any internal communal area (including corridors, stairwells, lobbies, shared entrances, meter cupboards, risers, and internal bin stores). This list is not exhaustive.

1. Combustible or bulky personal items

- Bicycles (unless a designated indoor cycle store is provided).
- Prams, buggies, pushchairs, children's ride-on toys.
- Plastics such as plastic garden furniture, toys, or storage boxes.
- Clothing, shoes, shoe racks, coat stands.
- Newspapers, cardboard boxes or packaging.
- Furniture of any kind, including decorative items, tables, ornaments, plants or flowers.
- Upholstered furniture or fabrics (chairs, cushions, curtains, wall hangings, rugs, carpets, mats).
- Door mats (including internal or external to the flat entrance).
- Mobility aids left unattended (wheelchairs, walking frames) unless specifically agreed as part of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

2. Fire-loading or ignition-risk items

- Candles, tea lights, incense sticks, matches or lighters.
- Portable heaters, radiators or heat-producing appliances.
- Electrical appliances not installed by SCDC (e.g., fridges, tumble dryers, microwaves).
- Extension leads, multi-socket adapters, trailing cables, or unattended charging devices.
- Loose lithium-ion batteries, chargers, power banks, tool batteries.
- E-bike or e-scooter batteries or chargers.

3. Hazardous, flammable or explosive substances

- Chemicals (paints, varnishes, solvents, turpentine, brush cleaner).
- Petrol, oil, diesel or other fuels.



- Fertilisers, weed killer or strong cleaning fluids.
- Gas cylinders (e.g., camping gas, BBQ gas, helium).
- Aerosols stored in bulk.
- Fireworks or pyrotechnics.

4. Waste or refuse

- Recycling boxes or bins (must be stored externally).
- Household refuse or black bags left outside flat doors.
- Bulky waste awaiting disposal or collection.

5. Vehicles and powered equipment

- Mopeds, scooters, motorcycles or any other fuelled or battery-powered vehicles.
- Mobility scooters (unless a designated storage/charging area is provided).

6. DIY and construction materials

- Wood, timber, doors, panels or other building materials
- Paint, mastics, glues, sealants, adhesives, fillers.
- Tools, ladders or work equipment.

7. BBQs and outdoor equipment

- BBQs (gas, charcoal or electric).
- BBQ fuels including charcoal, briquettes, firelighters or lighter fluid.

8. Laundry equipment

- Tumble dryers.
- Drying racks, airers, washing lines or other laundry equipment (unless provided by SCDC).

9. Seasonal or decorative items

- Christmas trees (real or artificial).
- Decorative lighting (e.g., fairy lights).
- Seasonal or festival decorations of any type.



10. Obstructions and fire safety compromises

- Items placed in stairwells, escape routes, or obstructing access/egress.
- Items propping open fire doors (including door wedges or “temporary” items).

Any other item which increases fire risk, obstructs access or escape routes, creates trip hazards, impedes emergency services, or interferes with cleaning or maintenance must not be stored in internal communal areas.

Housing Services may instruct removal of any such item at their discretion.



Appendix 2 – Grounds Maintenance

Grass cuts

SCDC undertakes grass cutting across communal green spaces up to 12 times per year, in line with seasonal growth patterns. The following standards apply:

- Grassed areas will be cut every 3 - 4 weeks during the growing season to maintain a tidy and safe environment.
- A neat cut will be applied across the whole grassed area.
- Litter will be removed from grassed areas prior to mowing to ensure safety and cleanliness.
- Strimming will be carried out only in areas that are inaccessible to mowing equipment.
- Grass cuttings will not be collected but will be cleared from footpaths and hard surfaces using appropriate 'blowing' equipment to prevent obstruction and maintain visual standards.

Rough cuts

Rough cuts are carried out primarily on grass areas located at the periphery of some estates. These areas are:

- Subject to an initial cut typically in April.
- Maintained through approximately 4 cuts per year.
- Cut to a longer length to support biodiversity and visual distinction, while avoiding an overgrown appearance.

Doubling Nature

SCDC aims to enhance biodiversity on its land through wildflower areas, reduced mowing where appropriate, habitat creation, and environmentally responsible maintenance.



Weed spraying

Weed spraying is carried out annually around street furniture and other designated areas. To minimise visual impact and preserve the appearance of grassed areas:

- Spraying is restricted to a maximum circumference of 15cm around each area.
- Application methods are selected to ensure that brown patches are kept to a minimum and do not detract from the overall appearance of communal green spaces.

Hedge Trimming

Hedges are maintained to ensure safety, accessibility and visual standards.

The following practices apply:

- Annual trimming is carried out during the autumn and winter months.
- Hedge sides are trimmed to prevent encroachment onto footpaths.
- The top of the hedge is levelled off to a maximum height of 2 metres for boundary hedges, and 1 metre for all other hedges.
- All hedges are maintained to present a neat, tidy and managed appearance.
- Sheltered Housing receive two hedge cuts per year to maintain enhanced standards.

Welfare (assisted) grass cuts

Residents eligible for welfare assistance will receive five grass cuts per year.

Eligibility includes:

- Residents aged over 65 with mobility impairments
- Residents with disabilities or long-term health conditions
- Other exceptional circumstances assessed by officers
- Don't have any relatives or support that could provide assistance locally
- Financial capacity

Reactive work

Any concerns regarding the condition, safety, or maintenance of trees located on



communal land owned by SCDC should be reported.

Residents may contact their Housing Services Officer (HSO), Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO), or report issues via email to duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk, or by calling the Council's Contact Centre.

Trees in tenants' gardens

SCDC will only consider undertaking tree maintenance within a tenant's garden where the tree presents a significant health and safety risk or is deemed unmanageable, and the tenant is unable to address the issue due to incapacity, with no family members or informal support available to assist.

Leaf clearance

Leaf clearance will be undertaken only where there is a demonstrable risk to health and safety, such as slip hazards, or blocked access routes.

Ditch clearance

Ditches will be cut and cleared annually, typically during January or February. Vegetation and debris resulting from the clearance will be raked from the ditch and left on the adjacent bank to naturally decompose, in line with environmental management practices.

Weed spray to hardstanding areas

Weed spraying on hardstanding surfaces will be carried out twice per year. Dead weeds will not be manually removed following treatment, unless they pose a safety or access concern.

Additional works

Requests for additional planned grounds maintenance works will be reviewed annually in November and December, with works prioritised based on assessed need and available budget. This ensures that resources are allocated effectively and fairly across estates.