



Neighbourhood Planning
Planning Policy Team
Hart District Council
Harlington Way
Fleet
GU51 4AE

27 August 2024

Dear Sirs

Re: Objection to the proposed designation of Land at Little Park, Odiham, as a Local Green Space in the updated Odiham and Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan.

We write on behalf of the landowner of the above site to strongly object to the proposed designation of the above site as Local Green Space. The proposal constitutes an entirely inappropriate attempt to re-run the arguments that were rejected by the previous Neighbourhood Plan Examiner.

Local Green Space (LGS) designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. An LGS designation affords the same protection from development as Green Belt.

We do not believe this extra protection for the site is necessary as discussed below.

In 2017, the Examiner rejected the inclusion of 'Land at the Deer Park' in developing the current Neighbourhood Plan as he did not consider the site 'local in character', writing in his report:

"However I am not satisfied that the proposed LGS is local in character. At 44 hectares in size I conclude that it is an extensive tract of land and that it is not local in character. It is extensive in its appearance and setting in relation to the village. It is extensive when viewed on the Policies Map. It is an important feature that dominates the landscape setting to the northern side of the village. In coming to this judgement, I recognise that each and every proposed local green space must be considered on its own merits. It is on this basis that Planning Practice Guidance does not identify a maximum size for designation."

Relevant Policy/Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 at paragraph 105 notes the following:

The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

Paragraph 106 requires that LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- b) *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- c) *local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

The following paragraphs from Planning Policy Guidance on new Local Green Space designation are pertinent to this objection:

What if land is already protected by designations such as National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled 8 Monument or conservation area?

Different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes. If land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 37-011-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How big can a Local Green Space be?

There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed. However, paragraph 100 [now paragraph 106] of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. Consequently blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Site Description

The site is located to the north of Odiham and to the east of North Warnborough and is in agricultural use. The land is privately owned and rented out to a local farmer who grazes predominantly cattle and sheep. There are footpaths traversing the site but there are no additional recreational facilities within the site nor permission to stray from the footpaths. There are no benches, picnic areas, play areas, toilet facilities or refreshments provided within the site.

Requirements for LGS Designation

As noted above, the NPPF at paragraph 106 sets out three criteria which must be met in order for an LGS designation to be made. In terms of the requirements of paragraph 106 the following is noted:

- Criterion a): It is agreed that the site is in close proximity to the community it serves and therefore complies with criterion a)

Criterion b): Previous surveys have demonstrated it is special to the local community and therefore it complies with criterion b)

Criterion c): The site is not local in character in terms of its size and it dominates the northern side of Odiham village – it therefore does **not** comply with criterion c). The land at Deer Park is 44ha which is an extensive tract of land when viewed in the context of the local area. This was also the view of the Examiner for the existing neighbourhood plan on reviewing the inclusion of land at Deer Park in 2017. The Examiner deleted this site as an LGS.

In accordance with the PPG, blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate and the classification should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.

Odiham Parish Council's (OPC) purported reliance on LGS designations in other Local Authority Areas is misplaced. As the previous Examiner also made plain, each proposed designation needs to be considered on its own merits. But in any event, OPC's approach is selective and self-serving. For example, OPC fail to mention in their supporting analysis, that in the neighbouring borough of Waverley, a similar proposal for inclusion of Cranleigh Agricultural Showground into the Cranleigh Neighbourhood Plan was deleted by the Examiner on 18 December 2023. Although the Examiner agreed compliance with criteria a) & b) of NPPF para 106, they considered that the 31.43ha was an extensive tract of land and was of a scale well beyond what may be regarded as 'local in character'. This site also did not have any additional protection from development above standard local plan policy.

Further examples are provided in the Examiner's review of the Hadley Wood Neighbourhood plan in their report dated 3 August 2023. At paragraph 4.13 of the report, in considering a site for LGS designation, the Examiner notes, "At 11.05 hectares, I consider that the site borders on being an extensive tract of land" – this is significantly smaller than the 44ha proposed at Deer Park. In the same examination, a proposed designation of a 64ha site was dismissed without further discussion on account of it being 'an extensive tract of land'.

In August 2022, the Teignmouth Local Green Spaces Assessment report noted the following in relation to the phrase 'extensive tract of land':

"There is no definition for this, but it is the intent of planning guidance that open tracts of countryside are considered as extensive tracts of land. However, extensive tracts of land will not usually see the other criteria / tests passed and so failure of the other tests will exclude a large area anyway. Examiners have excluded areas of 15ha and above. Experience suggests that most LGS are in the region of up to 10ha, with most smaller."

The site is indeed close to the community it serves but beyond being able to walk through the site, it does not have a high, if any, recreational value. The site is large (approximately 44ha) and while the description for inclusion as an LGS cites examples of other large sites which have been included in other neighbourhood plans, each of these have recreational facilities beyond footpaths through agricultural land.

The Ashton Court Estate (329ha) has the following facilities and features: on-site parking, two cafes, coach house, toilets with baby change facilities, woodland garden, picnic area, deer parks, miniature railway and a golf course. Many public events are also held on the estate. In addition, the whole of the site is available for public access and not just a limited number of public footpaths as is the case with the Little Park site.

The LGS in Laverstock & Ford, Castle Hill Country Park is approximately 50ha and was given to the Council as part of a housing development. The site is managed by the Land Trust to maximise the benefits for the local community and wildlife. The site provides parking, way-marked trails (including accessible trails), benches, an outdoor gym, picnic area and dog play/training area. The Examiner for the Laverstock and Ford Communities Neighbourhood Plan noted, *"Castle Hill Country Park: In NPPF criterion terms this space might easily be regarded as "an extensive tract of land". The explanatory text does not address this aspect of the NPPF criteria. Planning Guidance says: "blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name" (Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306). However, from my visit, it is evident that the Country Park is not "open countryside" but a managed space for the local community which has been scaled proportionately to the new developments which are adjacent or nearby. The open space has been created as part of a sustainable development and is now owned by the Parish Council."*

The Heath at Petersfield was also cited as a large LGS at 28ha. This features a 9ha pond with boats available for hire and a kiosk for drinks/snacks. The site also has a picnic area and children's play area. It is understood that the whole of the site is available for public access and not just the designated footpaths. It was a designated green space prior to the pre-submission version of the plan in 2014.

It is clear that for a larger site to be accepted as an LGS, it needs to have more use/facilities than rough footpaths through the site which make them suitable to be designated as such. It is, frankly, extraordinary that your 'evidence base' does not refer to the examples we cite above.

OPC provides a quote from a Martin Horwood, MP, giving guidance to Cheltenham Council on what the NPPF purportedly defines an 'extensive tract of land' – this is of no relevance. There is no evidence to support his opinion and no appropriate legislation cited.

The site is within a Conservation Area and is described in the Odiham and North Warnborough Conservation Area Appraisal. At section 6, "Management risks, opportunities and recommendation" recommendation 4 directly relates to the Land at Little Park.

Recommendation 4: Development that reduces public accessibility to any part of Little Park, or reduces its open, rural character, should be resisted given the unique and strong contribution it makes to the special historic interest of the conservation area, its open, rural character and appearance. Reason Openness and public accessibility are key characteristics of the Little Park, which has remained undeveloped for over a thousand years. It is a popular asset for the local community, which makes a strong and unique contribution to the character of Odiham Conservation area. The Little Park should therefore remain undeveloped."

Accordingly, the land is already protected from development by its location within the Conservation Area and no further benefit would be gained by designating the site as an LGS. In accordance with the PPG, in this case, it is not necessary to give this additional level of protection. Its location within the Conservation Area has already prevented a proposed development for 7 new homes (ref: 17/03029/FUL).

It is acknowledged that the site is of historical significance and its inclusion in the conservation area reflects this and protects the land from inappropriate development which

may cause harm to the heritage asset. In terms of its contribution to the character of the Basingstoke Canal, the site put forward for LGS status does not attach to the Basingstoke Canal.

Other Applications

Other attempts to give the land protection that it does not need include applications to Historic England for the land to be included in the National Register of Parks and Gardens and an application by Odiham Parish Council to have the land included in the Register of Assets of Community Value (ACV) – these applications have been considered and rejected.

Historic England have been asked on 2 occasions for The Little Park to be included in the National Register of Parks and Gardens; once in 2011/2012 and again in 2017 following the above mentioned planning application for 7 dwellings. Historic England noted,

"We have very carefully reassessed - including the consideration of new historical evidence and interpretation - the Little Park at Odiham. While its strong local significance is clear, its context has been eroded and we do not have either the archaeological or surviving physical evidence on which to base a landscape registration, and therefore it is not recommended that it should be added to the Parks and Gardens Register."

Odiham Parish Council, requested Hart District Council (HDC) to include the land in its register of Assets of Community Value (ACV). Land should only be considered as an ACV if its actual current use furthers the social wellbeing and interests of the local community, and that use is not an ancillary one. HDC acknowledged that the site was used by walkers but this use was secondary to its use as grazing land. In conclusion, HDC noted, *"From the information submitted it is not clear that the community use is a significant use in its own right in this context, and not subsidiary to the use as grazing land."* The land was not included in the register.

In summary, the site has been enjoyed by the community for many years without the land being designated as a Local Green Space and this will not change. The Conservation Area designation provides robust legislation against inappropriate development as has already been demonstrated by the planning history – development does not need to be controlled by assigning the land with LGS status.

Based on the above, it is plainly not appropriate to designate the site as a Local Green Space.

Extracts from the relevant documentary evidence referred to in this letter, is attached.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

MICHAEL CONOLEY DipArch RIBA

Cranleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021-2032

**A report to Waverley Borough Council on the
Cranleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Andrew Ashcroft
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BA (Hons) M.A. DMS M.R.T.P.I.**

Director – Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited

7.84 In its response to the clarification note on LGS A CPC commented that:

'For everything other than the Cranleigh Show, the area is used almost exclusively by local residents, Moreover, its use by local people has increased since Covid. One of the main reasons is that a lot of the countryside surrounding Cranleigh is not easily accessible for most people, due to its hilly, winding nature. Therefore, local residents have to travel a long way for more accessible informal leisure space, often well outside the village. The Showground is the only relatively flat space which is accessible for most people on the eastern side of the village. Also, there is no parking so most users walk to the area. Given how far it is for people from outside Cranleigh to travel to, the lack of parking is a deterrent and bicycles are not permitted. For these reasons it is considered that it is local in character,'

7.85 I have considered these conflicting views very carefully against the various tests in the NPPF. On the 'reasonably close proximity' test. I note that proposed LGS is on the north-eastern edge of the village. As such I am satisfied that this test is met.

7.86 On the 'demonstrably special' test Appendix 4.3 sets out a range of information on this matter. In summary it advises that:

- *the site is of particular importance with an area of Ancient Woodland and an Area of Great Landscape Value, it also is adjacent to the Surrey Hills AONB;*
- *the site is of particular recreational value and popular for walkers including those walking dogs on a daily basis and then for the major events running throughout the year;*
- *the site is a quiet and secluded area for daily walking as it is not interrupted by any roads and is flanked in the main by ancient woodland and with views of the Surrey Hills AONB beyond;*
- *Fishpond Copse section is classified as a site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) for its ancient semi natural woodland; and*
- *it is extremely important to the community of Cranleigh the Cranleigh Show alone attracts some 10,000 visitors and provides a link with Cranleigh's rural past and current rural businesses.*

7.87 On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the proposed designation meets this test. I have given considerable weight to the second, third and fourth points listed above.

7.88 On the size of the proposed LGS test the Appendix advises that it is 31.43 hectares. CPC acknowledges that this may represent an extensive tract of land and alerts me to a LGS elsewhere of a similar scale.

7.89 It is common ground that government guidance on this matter does not set a specific figure for what would be local in character and leaves matters for a degree of judgement. In this case I have concluded that the site is an extensive tract of land and not local in character. In my judgement it is of a scale well beyond what may be regarded as local in character. This is reinforced by its location on the north eastern edge of the village and its proximity to the wooded areas to the north and east. In reaching this judgement I have taken account of the information which CPC included

in Appendix 4.3 about the East Horsley Plan. However, each LGS needs to be assessed on its individual merits and direct comparisons between LGSs cannot be readily made.

- 7.90 Based on these findings I recommend that LGS A is deleted from the policy.

LGSO The Commons

- 7.91 In its representation the Royalton Group raises two matters. The first is the overall size of the proposed LGS (at 13.4 ha). The second is that the proposed area is already protected in either due to its location in the conservation area or that most of the proposed designation is Common Land.

- 7.92 In its response to the clarification note on LGS O CPC commented that

'For many of the same reasons that the Showground is local in character, the Common is considered local in character. The difference is in the way the space is used, with the Common less a space for walking and more for formal and informal leisure activities. The formal activities, such as the annual bonfire celebration are predominantly aimed at local people. The informal activities such as picnicking, etc, tend to mainly attract local people as it is a long way for non-residents to travel in order to undertake such activities. Whilst the common land designation affords certain protections, it does not address all matters satisfactorily. As the body that is the first port of call to protect the rights of the community, the Parish Council's experience is that legislation relating to common land is very complex and hard to uphold. Specifically, there are increasing areas of the Common that are being infringed on, either by seeking to park on or drive over them. This has been permitted through easements granted over many years but attempts to add further spaces that are the subject of such easements has increase in recent years. There is a steady erosion of the Common as a space for the community, therefore it is considered that a local green space designation is justified.'

- 7.93 On the 'reasonably close proximity' test I note that proposed LGS is located at the very heart of the village. As such I am satisfied that this test is met.

- 7.94 On the 'demonstrably special' test Appendix 4.3 sets out a range of information on this matter. In summary it advises that:

- *the site provides the major area of greenspace close to the centre of the village;*
- *the site contains several historic features. The remains of an historic Windmill (Killick's Mill) built C18 partially demolished 1917. A commemorative drinking fountain at the north end of the Cricket Ground erected by Cranleigh School in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The Grade II listed War Memorial erected in c1920 at the eastern end of the Common. Home of Cranleigh Cricket Club founded in 1856;*
- *the site includes Cranleigh Cricket Club and Cricket Academy with pitches and a clubhouse bordered by a newly coppiced willow hedge. The Common is used for Cranleigh's Carnival, bonfires, fireworks, and carnival stalls. It is used daily by walkers, including dog walking;*



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on Hadley Wood Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2039

**An Examination undertaken for the London Borough of Enfield Council
with the support of the Hadley Wood Neighbourhood Planning Forum on
the October 2022 submission version of the Plan.**

Independent Examiner: Jill Kingaby BSc (Econ) MSc MRTPI

Date of Report: 3 August 2023

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- LGS2 Hadley Wood Primary School Field already has protection from disposal under Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
- LGS5 Railway cuttings already has protection as Network Rail prohibits building works within prescribed distances of rail tracks and the boundary of its land;
- LGS9 Hadley Wood Golf Club at 64 hectares is a “significant tract of land” and therefore fails to meet the NPPF criteria for LGS designation; and
- LGS11 Sewitts Hill is part of the Golf Club estate and should be treated accordingly, rather than as a separate tract of land.

- 4.7 I am satisfied that these proposed modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan stemming from this review, to delete the above four LGSs, should be made, as set out in Policy HW-6 and Figure 20 of Document HW8, to have regard to the NPPF and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Also, Appendix 4 should be deleted, and a reference to the updated Local Green Spaces Assessment should be added to paragraph 5.15 of the Plan. These modifications are all shown in Document HW8.
- 4.8 The updated Local Green Spaces Review describes LGS1, Land to the east of the railway line, as a 5 hectare tract of land, with public accessibility, and the location for Hadley Wood Association community centre, Tennis Club and children’s playground. I saw at my site visit that it is close to the community it serves and well used. I support its designation as LGS, with the exclusion of the small area around the centre, as proposed in the updated Assessment, to enlarge and refurbish the community centre if required in future. Although LGS3, Land above the southern railway tunnel north and south of Camlet Way, has no public access for rail-related safety reasons, it is reportedly a haven for biodiversity with links to wildlife corridors. Adjacent to the Conservation Area and at the centre of Hadley Wood, I accept that it has local significance and is a small tract of land (0.6 hectares) which can be designated as LGS. LGS4, adjacent to St Paul’s Church, is a small publicly accessible space, used as a playground for St Paul’s Pre-School group, as well as for outdoor church services and social gatherings. I am satisfied that its designation as LGS meets the criteria in the NPPF and should be made.
- 4.9 LGS6, Hadley Wood Association land to the west of the railway line, contains sports’ fields, wildflower meadows and woodland. It is publicly accessible and used for walking and recreation, as well as by Mount House School for PE/sports’ activities and the PowerHause Football Academy. It is already protected by Green Belt designation, but given its size (4 hectares), its proximity to residential areas of Hadley Wood and its range of community uses, I support its designation as LGS. LGS7, land over the north railway tunnel is a publicly accessible 1 hectare tract of woodland, providing an important footpath link from the centre of Hadley Wood to Waggon Road and a section of National Cycle Route 12. The space is within the Green Belt, but I recognise its importance to the local community for walking and recreation and support its designation as LGS.

am satisfied that the Forum has taken account of the proposed site allocation SA45, but in view of the early stage of Local Plan preparation, and range of criticisms made by the Mayor of London and many others, including local residents and interest groups of Hadley Wood, I am satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan need not include an allocation for new housing on the Duchy site. In my view, the Enfield Local Plan, following future examination and adoption, is the mechanism for determining whether or not site allocation SA45 should be made, and not the current Hadley Wood Neighbourhood Plan.

- 4.13 I have also considered whether the Duchy's site, shown as LGS8 in the Neighbourhood Plan, fully meets the criteria for LGS, as defined in the NPPF (and further supplemented by advice in the PPG).¹⁷ At 11.05 hectares, I consider that the site borders on being an extensive tract of land and, although it is in close proximity to the community it serves, is not publicly accessible and is operated as pasture/grazing land. From my site visit, I realised that current views of the Duchy site from public vantage points are limited by mature vegetation, topography and hedgerows. Occupiers of properties along Camlet Way, Crescent West and Bartram's Lane may enjoy attractive private views across the land from their rear gardens and upper windows, especially in winter when vegetation may die back. However, the lack of public accessibility, combined with limited public viewpoints from within the Hadley Wood Neighbourhood Plan area, go against the requirement for being demonstrably special to the local community, in my opinion. The site is not used by the community for walking and recreational purposes as are the other proposed LGSs on the edge of the built-up area of Hadley Wood (LGSs 6, 7 & 10). The Duchy site already has the benefit of protection from inappropriate development as designated Green Belt. It is already designated as an Area of Special Character, a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation and an Area of Archaeological Importance.
- 4.14 Overall, I conclude that the case for LGS designation of LGS8 is not sufficiently strong. I recommend that Policy HW-6 and Figure 20 are modified to remove it as a LGS, for consistency with national planning policy. Furthermore, I observe that in the light of the 2020 Court of Appeal judgment in *R on the Application of Lochailort Investments Limited v Mendip District Council*¹⁸, the wording of the last clause in the policy should be revised to ensure that it has sufficient regard to the scope of the protection afforded by NPPF paragraph 103. On the main issue, I conclude that 5 of the 11 LGSs shown in Policy HW-6 of the submitted Neighbourhood Plan should be deleted, leaving in place six spaces which meet the NPPF requirements for designation. These should provide the local community with certainty that the predominant green character of the area, with a number of local places to enjoy wildlife and outdoor

¹⁷ See PPG Reference IDs: 37-005-20140306 to 37-022-20140306.

¹⁸ Case Number: C1/2020/0812.

Teignmouth Local Green Spaces Assessment Report

The Teignmouth Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy (Policy SLR1: Local Green Space, see Appendix 1 of this report) which proposes to designate Local Green Spaces (LGS).

For such areas to be designated they have to meet criteria set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in paragraph 102.

102. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The table below sets out each of the areas proposed for designation to determine whether they meet the NPPF criteria.

The proposed spaces will be tested further during consultation to confirm local importance to the community.

The Town Council has sought to contact as many land-owners of proposed spaces to be designated where they are in private ownership.

Figure 1: Testing Areas Against NPPF LGS Criteria

Proposed LGS	Close proximity to the community it serves?	Demonstrably special to the local community? ¹	Local in character?	Extensive tract of land ² (approx. land area)?	Commentary / Reasoning
Bitton House Grounds	Y	Y (as a social and tranquil space for recreational value)	Y	N (0.8 ha)	The space meets the requirements for designation as a LGS. The space forms the greenspace grounds of Bitton House, the location of the Town Council offices. There are no unimplemented planning permissions extant which would affect the designation as a LGS.
Broadmeadow Sports Field	Y	Y (for sports / recreational value)	Y	N (2.5 ha)	The space meets the requirements for designation as a LGS. There are no unimplemented planning permissions extant which would affect the designation as a LGS. Playing fields available for hire from Teignbridge District Council and used predominantly by the rugby club. Playing pitches referenced in and protected through the TDC Playing Pitch Strategy.
Coombe Vale (Bitton Park Brook and Coombe Valley Local Nature Reserve)	Y	Y (as a park for recreational use and for its richness of wildlife)	Y	Combined area N (6 ha)	The combined area of both Coombe Valley Nature Reserve and Bitton Brook Park is around 6 ha. Bitton Brook Park is 0.5 ha. Coombe Valley Local Nature Reserve is around 5.5 ha. As the two areas function together, it is not suggested that they are split. While the nature reserve has some protection from this status, it is considered that it should also be recognised as a LGS for its recreational value. There are no unimplemented planning permissions extant which would affect the designation as a LGS. This has been a valued local amenity going back for generations and gives access to nature and recreational activities for local residents and children of all ages. It has provided a scenic open air meeting point and includes a play area, sports field, picnic areas and well maintained woodland footpaths meandering alongside the brook, and alongside the popular Paddons Lane allotments. A short walk from the nearby residential areas it offers an opportunity to experience a tranquil location, teeming with

¹ i.e. beauty, historical significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife? Verges owned by the Highways Authority which do not have a recreational or heritage function are not typically considered as LGS.

² There is no definition for this, but it is the intent of planning guidance that open tracts of countryside are considered as extensive tracts of land. However, extensive tracts of land will not usually see the other criteria / tests passed and so failure of the other tests will exclude a large area anyway. Examiners have excluded areas of 15ha and above. Experience suggests that most LGS are in the region of up to 10ha, with most smaller.

**LAVERSTOCK AND FORD COMMUNITIES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2021 - 2036**

**The Report of the Independent Examiner to Wiltshire Council on the
Laverstock and Ford Communities Neighbourhood Plan**

**Andrew Matheson MSc MPA DipTP MRTPI FCIH
Independent Examiner
2nd July 2022**

'As part of the Wiltshire Local Plan Review a Consultation Paper was prepared on "Addressing climate change and biodiversity net gain" the content of and responses to which will inform policies in the draft Local Plan: [see here for fuller details.](#)'

As amended Policy 2 – renumbered from Policy 3 - meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 4 Designated Local Green Spaces

The supporting text to Policy 4 appears to confuse the value of green infrastructure in general with the specific requirements for the designation of Local Green Spaces as set down in the NPPF (paragraphs 101 – 103). It is also unclear where the interpretation of NPPF Policy provided in Appendix 10 has come from. Appendix 10 is incorrect in stating that LGS is a designation by the local planning authority – Neighbourhood Plans are perhaps the primary source of designations – and incorrect in implying that the boundaries to the designated area should be sourced elsewhere; the Neighbourhood Plan defines the area to be designated and the plans must be drawn accordingly. Direct attention to each criterion as well as the expectations referenced in the Planning Guidance is required. Further, a NPPF criterion states that designation requires a space to be “demonstrably special to a local community *and* [my emphasis] holds a *particular* [my emphasis] local significance” rather than the truncated version shown in the Appendix. Whilst it is evidenced that many of the NPPF criteria are met, this latter requirement must also be met. Other broader designations, for instance as local green infrastructure, may be more appropriate for many green spaces.

From my visit to each site my assessments, based on the NPPF criteria, are:

Castle Hill Country Park: In NPPF criterion terms this space might easily be regarded as “an extensive tract of land”. The explanatory text does not address this aspect of the NPPF criteria. Planning Guidance says: “blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a ‘back door’ way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name” (Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306). However, from my visit, it is evident that the Country Park is not “open countryside” but a managed space for the local community which has been scaled proportionately to the new developments which are adjacent or nearby. The open space has been created as part of a sustainable development and is now owned by the Parish Council. Whilst the space is variable in character, since the whole has been planned and is managed together, I accept that it is appropriate to designate the whole as a Local Green Space.

Old Sarum Community Green Spaces (three areas): From the map alone these spaces, or some of them, might be regarded as incidental green spaces, breaking up the developed areas, rather than being of a “particular” local significance. However, from my visit it is evident that the spaces are well planned, host a range of community activities and are well used by residents. Accordingly, the Local Green Space designation is appropriate.

Hampton Park Green: From the description and from the evidence of my visit, this area would appear to function as a traditional village green and therefore the NPPF criteria are met.

Longhedge Village Community Green Space: Although this is a new green space and may not have yet established its full significance, the fact that it is adjacent to and planned as part of a new community as well as providing access to the Monarch’s Way is a reasonable basis for establishing that it is “demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance”.

Ford Green on Manor Farm Road: The Ministry of Defence (MoD), as owners, objected to this designation, noting that there is no public right of access and questioning whether the