

Appendix 4

ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE IN THE FLEET TOWN COUNCIL DESIGNATED AREA

1. Introduction

1.1 Fleet Town Council has set out to identify important areas of Local Green Space across the designated area. These are areas that hold a particular importance to the community, which if designated in the Neighbourhood Plan would be protected from inappropriate development.

1.2 The Hart District Council Draft Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032 already identifies some protection of open space through Policies **I12 Green Infrastructure** and **I14 Open Space Sports and Recreation** but designation as a Local Green Space is different. Introduced by the Government in 2012, the designation focusses on protecting areas which hold a particular significance to the local community. Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that this designation should be consistent with the strategic aims of the Local Plan, and should not be a means of preventing the wider development needs of the district.

1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has prepared this assessment to create a consistent and transparent methodology for evaluating potential Local Green Space. It forms part of a robust evidence base which has informed the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 This assessment establishes four tests which potential sites must pass in order to qualify as Local Green Space. It also demonstrates how each of the sites identified in the Pre-Submission Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies these tests.

2. Policy Background

National Planning Policy

2.1 In March 2012 the Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), introduced a new Local Green Space designation. NPPF §76 allows local communities, through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan process, to identify areas of Local Green Space which are important to them and which should be provided special protection.

2.2 NPPF §77 makes it clear that the designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community which it serves;
- where the green area is 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
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

2.3 NPPF §78 states that Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

2.4 Additional guidance on Local Green Space designation is provided in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) ID: 37 Paragraphs 005-022. Of particular relevance are the following paragraphs.

- §007 – Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs, and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making [Reference ID: 37-00720140306].
- §011 – If land is already protected by designation (e.g. AONB, conservation area), then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space [Reference ID: 37-011-20140306].
- §013 – Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis [Reference ID: 37-013-20140306].
- §015 – 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 [Reference ID: 37-015-20140306].
- §020 – Designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners [Reference ID: 37-02020140306].

Local Planning Policy

2.5 Draft Local Plan **Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Growth**, focuses growth within defined settlements, on previously developed land in sustainable locations, and on allocated sites as shown on the Policy Maps. This includes 1500 houses on Hartland Village the previously National Gas Turbine Research site, locally known as Pyestock. Apart from this major brown field site development only a further 94 houses are identified on registered SHLAA sites within the immediate town area (Appendix 2 Housing Numbers and Trajectory)

2.6 The Policies Map for the Draft Local Plan shows the location of development boundaries for each identified site

2.7 Under the provisions of PPG ID: 37 Paragraph: 007, Local Green Space designation must be consistent with the above policy. None of the proposed Local Green Space sites conflict with any development proposals within the Draft Local Plan.

3. Criteria for assessing Local Green Space

3.1 Based on the principles established in the NPPF and PPG, four tests have been devised for identifying Local Green Space across the designated area.

Test 1. Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?

- The NPPF states that to be designated as a Local Green Space an area should be in reasonably close proximity to the community which it serves. Sites which are entirely isolated from the community will not be considered.
- PPG requires that if public access is a key factor, then the Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community served. As a guide, 'easy walking distance' has been defined as being within 5 minutes' walking time of the nearest settlement boundary.
- It is recognised that some discretion may be needed depending on the topography of the area, the mobility and size of the community, and the size and function of the Local Green Space itself.

Test 2. Is the site demonstrably special to the local community?

- The designation of Local Green Space must be based on evidence which demonstrates why the area is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. To pass this test, an area must be demonstrably special and locally significant in one of the following categories.
- Beauty – This relates to the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site, and its contribution to the streetscape, landscape, character or setting of a settlement. To qualify, the site should contribute significantly to local character, for example by defining a sense of place, or by helping to define the physical form of a settlement.
- Historic significance – This relates to the historic importance a site holds for the local community. This could be because it contributes to the setting of a heritage asset or some other locally valued landmark. It might be because the site holds cultural associations which are of particular significance to the local community. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. AONB), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- Recreational value – Sites would need to hold local significance for recreation and be important to the community for a particular recreation activity or range of activities. These could be formal or informal activities.
- Tranquillity – In order to qualify, the site would need to be viewed by local people as important for the tranquillity it provided, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.
- Richness of wildlife – A site would need to be locally significant for wildlife in a way that could be demonstrated. It might, for example, home to species or habitats of principal importance, veteran trees, or locally characteristic plants and animals such as mistletoe. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. SSSI), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- Other reason – Sites might be special and locally significant for reasons other than those identified above. For example, a site might make a particular contribution to defining the individual character of a settlement, or it might be an asset of community value.

Test 3. Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?

- The NPPF makes clear that the area to be designated should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

- PPG states that blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.
- Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for an area of Local Green Space, the Town Council considers that any site of more than 10 hectares might reasonably be interpreted as 'extensive' or 'blanket'.

Test 4. Does the site already have planning permission, or has it been allocated for development in the Draft Local Plan?

- The first stage in the assessment will be to review the planning history of each site to ensure that it is not subject to an extant planning permission and that it has not been allocated for development under the Local Plan.
- The Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development, or where it has been allocated for development under the Local Plan.
- An exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space designation would be compatible with the planning permission / Local Plan allocation, or where the planning permission / allocation is no longer capable of being implemented.

4. Consultation

4.1 This assessment will be published as part of the Neighbourhood Plan evidence base, where it can be viewed and commented on by all those taking part in the consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft.

4.2 The views of external organisations will be sought through the consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft

4.3 The Town Council will invite all known landowners to make representations about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Wherever land has been registered, landowners will be written to at the address held by the Land Registry at least six weeks before the finalised Neighbourhood Plan proposal is submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

5. Areas identified as potential Local Green Space

5.1 The table below provides information about each of the sites proposed as Local Green Space in the Pre-Submission Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan (6 March 2016). These have been assessed against each of the four tests set out above.

Open Space/ FTC referenced	HDC Ref.	Designation	Current Use	Test 1 Proximity to Community	Test 2 Demonstrably Special	Test 3 Local in Character (extent)	Test 4 Planning or listed
Ancells Farm Park–(1)	116	Park recreation area	Recreation– football pitches, pavilion and open space Playground, woodland	Integral part of local estate, surrounded by housing development and main road	Designated park in original plan for development. Has become a community focal point. Supports local youth football team. Well provisioned infant and junior play areas	Relatively isolated green space 2.9ha in area,	No
Basingbourne Park / Woodland (2)	128 129	Park recreation area and SINC	Recreation - football pitches, pavilion Playground and open space Woodland and heathland	Adjacent to established housing estates. Predominantly of mixed woodland surrounded on three sides by housing and isolated in the north west by the Basingstoke canal	Woodland designated SINC status. Small area of acid heathland also designated as a SINC Supports local youth football teams. Area of nature conservation. Diversity of flora and fauna. Supports local scout and guide troupes. Community focal point for large urban estate. Woodland adjacent to the canal provides an area of tranquillity with	Total park/public space area is 10.9ha , but separated into two distinct areas only accessible by narrow woodland path.	No

Open Space/ FTC referenced	HDC Ref.	Designation	Current Use	Test 1 Proximity to Community	Test 2 Demonstrably Special	Test 3 Local in Character (extent)	Test 4 Planning or listed
					diverse wildlife.		
Calthorpe Park – (3)	118 269	Park recreation area	Recreation – football pitches, football club, tennis courts, cricket club open space, HQ of Scouts, informal woodland Community events The park is intersected by a cycle way that runs from the town centre to local schools.	Central to extensive urban development, surrounded by housing estates	Historic significance - Land donated to the people of Fleet by the Honourable Dame Rachel Anstruther- Gough Calthorpe in 1926. Largest open space in the urban area. Supports large number of local youth football teams. Is the venue for Fleet’s major community events, the Carnival, Fireworks display and half marathon. Supports Sea scout troop. Location of Fleet Town’s only public tennis courts	Fleet’s largest urban green space total area 13.9 ha of which 1.75 Ha is leased to Fleet Town Football Club and 1.7 Ha is leased to Fleet Cricket Club. Publicly accessible space is just over 10 Ha.	No
Oakley Park – (4)	124 125 126	Park recreation /conservation area and SINC	Recreation, football pitch, infant play area, woodland, pond, stream	Central to extensive urban development, sandwiched between two roads and housing.	Historic significance. Land donated to the people of Fleet by the Oakley Family. Pond is a designated SINC. Nature conservation area.	4.9ha of open green space and mixed woodland	No

Open Space/ FTC referenced	HDC Ref.	Designation	Current Use	Test 1 Proximity to Community	Test 2 Demonstrably Special	Test 3 Local in Character (extent)	Test 4 Planning or listed
					Community recreation and leisure focal point. Very active "Friends" Group help with maintenance of area and organise community events.		
The Views – (5)	119 120 121	Park recreation area	Recreation and Leisure Community events Infant play area Skate Park The park is intersected by a cycle way that runs from the town centre to local schools	Immediately adjacent to Fleet business/commercial area	Historic significance - Land bought by Fleet Urban District Council. Provides green space to local nursery school. Infant recreation area and skate park in close proximity to town centre . Fleet's only toboggan slope. Location for smaller community events such as Fleet Food Festival. Provides tranquillity – planned sensory trail.	An isolated pocket of 1.923 Ha of open space surrounded by housing.	No
Fleet Cemetery – (7)	117	Cemetery	Fleet's only active cemetery	Within the urban developed area, surrounded by established housing estates. Isolated	Number of historic graves. Well landscaped with many mature trees. Room for expansion to	Urban cemetery. 2.7 Ha total area.	No

Open Space/ FTC referenced	HDC Ref.	Designation	Current Use	Test 1 Proximity to Community	Test 2 Demonstrably Special	Test 3 Local in Character (extent)	Test 4 Planning or listed
				from other green areas	provide a memorial garden. Very tranquil space within the urban environment. Supports a diversity of wildlife.		
Amenity land in Ancells (8)		Amenity Land		Serves the immediate housing estate	Occasional green space in a densely developed housing estate	1.5ha(total) Surrounded by housing, does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Dukes Mead – (9)		Amenity Land	Recreation, dog walking	Part of 1960's housing estate, surrounded by housing	Provides a unique open space within housing estate. Stand of mature oak trees	0.266ha , Does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Durnsford Avenue (13)		Amenity Land	Informal play area	Part of housing estate, readily accessible by residents	Land designated as play area in original planning approval. Used by local children hemmed in by canal and Reading Road South.	0.901ha , Does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Holland Gardens (10)		Amenity Land	Informal play area	Part of housing estate, readily accessible by local residents.	Small open space in dense housing development. Used as informal play area including football. Provides access to the	0.638ha Does not form part of any continuous open space	No

Open Space/ FTC referenced	HDC Ref.	Designation	Current Use	Test 1 Proximity to Community	Test 2 Demonstrably Special	Test 3 Local in Character (extent)	Test 4 Planning or listed
					footpath to Basingstoke Canal.		
Leawood Road / New Barn Close –(11)		Amenity Land	Parent waiting area for children from All Saints School.	Readily accessible by local residents, bordered by roads and a school	Informal play space for children pre and post school time. Safe collection/waiting area for parents	0.164ha Surrounded by housing, does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Longmead – (12)		Amenity Land	Open green space	Integral part of housing estate, readily accessible	Tranquil spot off busy Reading Road South. Considered for community orchard	0.14 ha Does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Regents Close (C)		Amenity Land	Informal Play area	Part of housing estate, surrounded by housing readily accessible	Long established informal play area, open community space within housing estate	0.13ha of open space surrounded by housing, does not form part of any continuous open space	No
Edenbrook LEAP- (6)		Playground	Play area	Part of housing estate within easy walking distance for residents.	Designated LEAP to housing estate	0.123ha play area within housing estate	No
Edenbrook NEAP (6)		Playground	Play area	Part of housing estate within easy walking distance for residents.	Designated NEAP to housing estate	0.1247ha play area within housing estate	No