

Elstead and Weyburn Neighbourhood Plan

Local Green Spaces Assessment Paper

March 2020

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1.0 Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the assessment process undertaken by the Elstead and Weyburn Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to inform the selection of sites suitable for designation as Local Green Spaces.

Policy Context

- 1.2 Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that through Neighbourhood Plans local people should be able to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection, ruling out new development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 99 also states that the spaces should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.
- 1.3 Paragraph 100 elaborates on what green spaces could be eligible for Local Green Space Designation, as follows:

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

- *In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *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*
- *Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”.*

- 1.4 Planning Practice Guidance adds detail to paragraph 100 in the section on “Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space”. Of particular note to the green spaces assessed in this paper are the following paragraphs:

“How is land designated as Local Green Space?

Local Green Space designation is for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These plans can identify on a map (‘designate’) green areas for special protection. Anyone who wants an area to be designated as Local Green Space should contact the local planning authority about the contents of its local plan or get involved in neighbourhood planning.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 37-006-20140306

“What if land is already protected by Green Belt or as Metropolitan Open Land (in London)?

If land is already protected by Green Belt policy, or in London, policy on Metropolitan Open Land, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

One potential benefit in areas where protection from development is the norm (eg villages included in the green belt) but where there could be exceptions is that the Local Green Space designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community.

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 37-010-20140306

What if land is already protected by designations such as National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled 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

What types of green area can be identified as Local Green Space?

The green area will need to meet the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework. 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.

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 37-013-20140306

How close does a Local Green Space need to be to the community it serves?

The proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close. For example, if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 37-014-20140306

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 77 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

Is there a minimum area?

Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space.

Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 37-016-20140306

What about public access?

Some areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may already have largely unrestricted public access, though even in places like parks there may be some restrictions. However, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access (eg green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty).

Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present. Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with land owners, whose legal rights must be respected.

Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 37-017-20140306

Does land need to be in public ownership?

A Local Green Space does not need to be in public ownership. However, the local planning authority (in the case of local plan making) or the qualifying body (in the case of neighbourhood plan making) should contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan.

Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 37-019-20140306

- 1.5 NPPF Paragraph 101 states that protection of Local Green Spaces should be consistent with Green Belt development policy.

2.0 Assessment

2.1 The Steering Group compiled a list of potential Local Green Spaces based on local knowledge.

2.2 Table 1, below, assesses each potential Local Green Space in the context of the qualifying criteria set out in paragraph 100 of the NPPF.

Table 1 – Local Green Spaces Assessment

| Green Space | Is the Green Space in reasonably close proximity to the people it serves? | Is the Green Space special and does it hold a particular local significance? | Is the Green Space local in character and not an extensive tract of land? | Outcome |
|--|--|---|---|---------|
| The two Village Greens (the main green at the junction of the Milford Road and Thursley Road and the Church Green opposite St James' Church) | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provides significant heritage and recreational value to the community it serves. | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |
| Thursley Road Recreation Ground | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provide significant recreational value to the community it serves | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |
| Burford Lodge Recreation Ground | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provide significant recreational value to the community it serves | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |
| Land at Bonfire Hill | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provides significant heritage, recreational value, tranquillity and | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |
| The triangle by Shackleford / Milford Road (Marcus's Triangle) | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provides richness of wildlife. | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |
| The verge outside Lex Farm and Thistledown Farm | Yes, the space is within an easy and safe walking distance to the community it serves. | Yes. The space provides richness of wildlife. | Yes. It is a clearly defined local green space. | |

Summary

2.3 The following will be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Elstead and Weyburn Neighbourhood Plan:

1. The two Village Greens (the main green at the junction of the Milford Road and Thursley Road and the Church Green opposite St James' Church)
2. Thursley Road Recreation Ground
3. Burford Lodge Recreation Ground
4. Land at Bonfire Hill
5. The triangle by Shackleford / Milford Road (Marcus's Triangle)
6. The verge outside Lex Farm and Thistledown Farm.

2.4 These Local Green Spaces are detailed in Policy ESDQ4 of the Neighbourhood Plan and shown on the Key Diagram.

