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INFORMATION SHEET NO: C20

Local Green Space Designation

Local Green Space Designation

What is it?

The National Planning Framework (NPPF), published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2012, sets out the government's planning policies for England. Paragraphs 76 to 78 introduce a new Local Green Space designation (LGS) to protect local green areas of particular importance to local communities. This will enable communities, in certain circumstances, to identify and protect areas that are of value to them through local and neighbourhood plans.

Once designated, the LGS is subject to the same strong development restrictions as Green Belt, and new development here is ruled out other than in special circumstances.

The LGS is designated by the planning authority (borough, district, metropolitan or other unitary authority). Local people need to lobby the authority to designate LGS, based on the criteria. We explain below what we know of the LGS: whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion.

Some areas may already be available for public access, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access. Designation does not confer any rights of access over what currently exists.

Local Green Space criteria

1. Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves

There is no definition of this in the NPPF and it will be up to individual planning authorities to define. This may vary depending on the size of the community to which the green space relates, the size of the green space or the value placed on it by the community. The land must not be isolated from the community and would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served. Some councils have policies relating to LGS and have introduced a maximum distance between the space and the community. For instance, Leicester has stated it must be within 400 metres, Central Bedfordshire 600 metres.

2. Demonstrably special to a local community

Evidence must be provided of the land's value to and use by the local community to show the land holds a particular local significance. The land must fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) *Beauty*
This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to landscape, character and or setting of the settlement. LGS would need to contribute to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place, and make an important contribution to the physical form and layout of the settlement. It may link up with other open spaces and allow views through or beyond the settlement which are valued locally.
- (b) *Historic significance*
The land should provide a setting for, and allow views of, heritage assets or other locally-valued landmarks. It may be necessary to research historic records from the County Archaeologist or National or Local Records Office.
- (c) *Recreational value*
It must have local significance for recreation, perhaps through the variety of activities it supports, and be of value to the community.
- (d) *Tranquillity*
Some authorities have an existing 'tranquillity map' showing areas that provide an oasis of calm and a space for quiet reflection.
- (e) *Richness of wildlife*
This might include the value of its habitat, and priority areas may have been identified by the council. It may require some objective evidence, such as a designation, like a wildlife site or Local Nature Reserve.

3. Local in character, not an extensive tract of land

The criteria may differ between settlements depending on their physical size and population. The areas would normally be fairly self-contained with clearly-defined edges. Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. There is a no minimum size limit for LGS.

4. Land already designated

If land is already protected by Green Belt policy or, in London, policy on Metropolitan Open Land, consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained. This may be in a case

where LGS designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community.

Process

LGS can only be designated when the local plan is being reviewed or a neighbourhood plan is being produced. Designating any LGS will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. LGS will rarely be appropriate where land has planning permission for development. Exceptions can be made where the development will be compatible with the reasons for designation. However, even if neither of these processes is occurring in your area now, you should identify the areas you would like to see designated as LGS.

Check if your council has policies for the designation of LGS and frame your application accordingly. Collect the evidence for designation, and submit this to the council when the local plan is reviewed or neighbourhood plan is being produced. Lobby your councillor too.

Some planning authorities have identified a list of areas that they consider would be appropriate for LGS designation. This may be part of a consultation on Draft Site and Policies Plan, or Allocations Plan.

Examples of land designated as LGS include:

Aspley Guise, Central Bedfordshire

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Local%20Green%20Space%20Paper%20FINAL_tcm6-55549.pdf

Chapel-en-le-Frith, (Derbyshire) neighbourhood plan illustrates the types of land which have been designated:

<http://www.chapelparishneighbourhoodplan.org/>

Freshford and Limpley Stoke (Wiltshire) neighbourhood plan includes local greenspace:

http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/spatial_planning/np/fflsareadesig-np?pointId=1355997288055

Queen's Crescent, Exeter, Devon

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=18077&p=0>

Useful websites

Department for Communities and Local Government:

'Get the green space you want: how the government can help'

<http://tinyurl.com/p3l4l7b>

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/>

Leicestershire County Council, Green Spaces in Leicester and Leicestershire: local green spaces toolkit:

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/greenspaces>

Extract from National Planning Policy Framework (DGLG 2012, paragraphs 76-78)

76. *Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space, local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore 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 reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*
77. *The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:*
- *Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community 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.*

78. *Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.*

While the Open Spaces Society has made every effort to ensure the information obtained in this factsheet is an accurate summary of the subject as at the date of publication, it is unable to accept liability for any misinterpretation of the law or any other error or omission in the advice in this paper.

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