LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION AND METHODOLOGY

APRIL 2016
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced a new Local Green Space (LGS) designation. LGS designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

1.2 These LGSs will be identified and designated through Local and Neighbourhood Plans to ensure they are considered in the context of other possible land uses and community needs.

1.3 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community. As well as recreational benefits, green spaces also improve the visual amenity for any particular areas.

1.4 This document will guide and support communities and organisations on the process for designating LGSs. It sets out a methodology and evidence required to identify LGS designation within South Northamptonshire.

1.5 The report covers the following key areas:

- National and Local Policy Context
- Designation criteria
- Process for Designation

2. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 The NPPF published in 2012 introduced a new LGS designation. Paragraph 76 of the NPPF says that local communities should be given the opportunity to identify green areas of particular importance to them through local and neighbourhood plans. This designation would have a high degree of protection from new development. Importantly national planning policy makes it clear that this designation should be consistent with wider planning policy for the area and should complement investment in the provision of new homes, employment opportunities and other essential services.

2.2 Paragraph 77 of the NPPF makes clear that LGS designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used in the following circumstances:

- Where the green area is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
• Where the green area is demonstrably special to a community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historical significance, recreational value, 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 If land is already protected by other designations such as National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a Conservation area, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as a LGS.

2.4 A LGS does not need to be in public ownership. However the Council will contact the landowner (if known) at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as a LGS. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals.

2.5 Additional guidance is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

3. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The West Northants Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) is the strategic document that covers the whole of West Northamptonshire which includes the areas of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire and has set out the long term vision and objectives for the whole of the West Northamptonshire area for the plan period up to 2029, including strategic policies for steering and shaping development.

3.2 The quality of the environment presents a number of challenges that the WNJCS must address when delivering new development. Policies BN1 Green Infrastructure Connections and BN5 Historic Environment and Landscape both promote the protection and enhancements of our natural and historical assets.

3.3 The WNJCS provides a strategic framework to guide the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans which will provide the more detailed planning policies and site allocations in each District.

3.4 Through a series of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) the Local Plan Part 2a will set out the planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications and identify areas of the district to be allocated for development and areas that should be protected.

3.5 The purpose of this document is to:
• Provide local communities with the opportunity to identify those areas of green space valued by local people; and

• To provide a framework through which LGSs important to local communities will be assessed for designation for the Local Plan Part 2a.

4. DESIGNATION CRITERIA

4.1 Whilst the NPPF establishes the concept of LGS designation and provides some guiding principles, it leaves it to local authorities, in partnership with local communities to determine how to implement this at the local level.

4.2 The assessment of applications will be led by the Council’s Planning Policy Team. Figure 1 illustrates the factors that need to be considered in considering whether a site may be suitable for LGS designation. Table 1 sets out the methodology and describes how sites/spaces will be assessed. It expands on the principles established in the NPPF to provide a consistent and transparent methodology for identifying LGSs in the District.
**Figure 1 - Designation Criteria**

**Potential Local Green Space Site**

**TEST 1** – Does the site already have planning permission?

- **Yes**

- **No**

**TEST 2** – Is the site allocated for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan?

- **Yes**

- **No**

Unless that permission/allocation can be implemented and the Local Green Space still be accommodated on the site, Local Green Space designation is not normally appropriate.

**TEST 3** – Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?

- **Yes**

- **No**

**TEST 4** – Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community?

- **Yes**

- **No**

The site is not likely to be suitable for Local Green Space designation

**TEST 5** – Is the site an extensive tract of land?

- **Yes**

- **No**

**TEST 6** – Can the site endure beyond the Local or neighbourhood plan period?

- **Yes**

Complete the Local Green Space proposal form to progress the consideration as to whether the site is suitable for Local Green Space designation

Consider other alternatives to Local Green Space designation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Explanation of criteria / evidence prompts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Does the site already have planning permission?</td>
<td>The LGS designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for the development.</td>
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<td>- Sites with existing planning permission will not be considered appropriate and no further assessment will be carried out.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the planning permission or where permission is no longer capable of being implemented.</td>
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<td>- Sites that already have a national designation for protection e.g. SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) LNR (Local Nature Reserve, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Registered Historic Park and Garden or public right of way which is protected by other legislation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Is the site allocated for development in the Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan?</td>
<td>The NPPF says that the designation of LGSs should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. In particular plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and LGS designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.</td>
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<td>Sites allocated in the local or neighbourhood plan will not be considered appropriate and no further assessment will be carried out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</td>
<td>The NPPF states that to be designated as a LGS the area should be reasonably close to the community they serve. The proximity of a LGS to the community it serves will be dependent on local circumstances including why the green area is seen as special. For example if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served. Sites should feel part of the local area, sites which are entirely isolated from the</td>
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Natural England has set a range of accessibility standards for natural sites and areas within easy reach of people’s homes. Natural England’s document “Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (ANGSt) 2010 recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home which is considered to be an appropriate walking distance.

| 4 | Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? | The proposed designation of LGSs must be based on evidence to demonstrate why the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance.

To meet this requirement evidence must exist to satisfy at least one of 5 special characteristics listed below:

- **Beauty** – this would include the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site; and its contribution to townscape, landscape, character and/or setting of the settlement. Features on sites such as woodland and water could also contribute to the overall value of the site. It would be expected that the area contributes significantly to the local identify and character of the area and plays an important role in defining the sense of place of the area.

- **Historical significance** – The site is viewed to be of local significance because of its historic importance to the local community. For example:
  - There are recognised historical or archaeological features/assets on site
  - The site links back to a historical person or event
  - The site has retained historical features and boundaries.

- **Recreational value** – The site holds a local significance for recreation providing an important asset for the community for a particular activity or for a range of activities. Although most green and open...
spaces will fall within this category and offer some form of recreational value, the aim is to identify why a particular area offers something unique and could not realistically be accommodated on the sites that would serve the community.

- **Tranquillity** – The site submitted is viewed to be of importance to the local community because of the tranquillity it provides, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment. It would need to demonstrate the following qualities:
  - A feeling of remoteness or quiet contemplation
  - A general inability to see man-made structures such as roads, power-lines or excessive lighting
  - Has a general lack of artificial noise from vehicles or industry

- **Richness of wildlife** – For a site to be considered suitable for LGS status for its richness of wildlife, it would need to relate to one or more of the following:
  - Be designated as a Local Wildlife site
  - Include a combination of important landscape features such as ancient Hedgerows, Ancient Woodland, Veteran trees, pockets of woodland and wildflower meadow
  - Support a unique and/or diverse range of wildlife. This would need to be evidenced by records, ecological surveys and/or expert advice.

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<td>5</td>
<td>Is the site an extensive tract of land?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>If site/space was designated could</td>
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The site endure beyond the end of the plan period (2029) end of the plan period. The NPPG states that how a LGS will be managed in the future is an important consideration, if the features that make it special or locally significant are to be conserved.

## 5. PROCESS FOR DESIGNATION

### 5.1 Step 1: Test the site against Figure 1 – Designation criteria of this document.

### 5.2 Step 2 Submit proposed site/space and supporting evidence on the Local Green Space Proposal Form to South Northamptonshire Council no later than noon on June 10th 2016.

The onus is on the person/community representative to supply evidence to support the designation.

### 5.3 Step 3: South Northamptonshire Council will review all the evidence submitted and consider whether the site/space fits with the principles established in the NPPF and the additional guidance provided in the NPPG (National Guidance - see section 2); and local guidance to determine if the site/space is suitable for designation. Please see details of this set out in section 4.

### 5.4 Step 4: If the site/space is going to be proposed for designation within the ‘proposed submission’ version of the Local Plan Part 2a, South Northamptonshire Council will contact the land owners (if known).

### 5.5 Step 5: Suitable spaces for designation will then be incorporated into the ‘proposed submission’ version of the Local Plan Part 2a currently scheduled for formal consultation in early 2017.

### 5.6 Step 6: The proposed designation of sites/spaces will be “tested” through the plan process. Anybody can object to policies or designations in a plan during the consultation period and these consultation responses must be considered. Objections can also be made to the non-designation of spaces. Local Plans are formally scrutinised by an independent Planning Inspector, who will ensure that the plans are robust and based on sound evidence.

### 5.7 Step 7: Formal designation will take place when the Local Plan Part 2a is adopted, currently anticipated to take place mid 2018.