



**CHIPPENHAM
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN_**

Chippenham Town Council

Consultation Statement: Appendix S
LGS Landowner Objections

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Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group notified landowners of their intention to designate specific Local Green Spaces (LGS) in writing in advance of the publication of the Pre-Submission Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix J of the Consultation Statement. In all cases there has been some liaison between the Steering Group and the landowners who have subsequently objected to the proposed LGS's.

The NPPF 2021 para. 101 allows neighbourhood plans to designate Local Green Spaces to protect green areas of particular importance to them. LGS designations should be consistent with local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.

NPPF para.102 sets out the criteria that should be used to determine Local Green Spaces:

‘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.’

Planning Practice Guidance on Open Space states:

‘...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

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Planning Practice Guidance goes on to state:

‘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.’

Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 37-020-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

The position is therefore not clearly set out whether objections from landowners override the proposed designation since landowners only have ‘opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals.’

The key decision-making point will then rely upon para. 101 of the NPPF ‘LGS designations should be consistent with local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.’

Advice was sought from Locality on how to address landowner objections to proposed LGS designations. Francis Shaw, Neighbourhood Planning Programme Manager for Locality, indicated that there was nothing more to add to the references above and that at the Examination, the Examiner would need to find the planning balance between the need to designate the LGS against other potential sustainable development on the land in question.

In light of the objections from some landowners to LGS designation, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have carefully assessed the need for the LGS and the strength of the fit between the requirements of para. 102, against the proposed future uses by the landowner. The planning balance has considered whether expected future non-LGS use can be met elsewhere or whether it is necessary to be retained on the proposed LGS site. If the need can be met elsewhere, then there is a stronger case for designation as LGS.

The following pages of this document set out the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group’s specific responses to the landowner objections received, based upon the above assessment.

LGS B - Baydons Wood, Baydons Meadow and Long Close

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not owner of whole site - see clarification plan. Not supportive as landowner we consider does not meet the tests as extensive tract of land (especially combined with LGS WW). May offer opportunity for sustainable development.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS B was demonstrably special to the local community for its wildlife value and community value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan).

The Woodland Trust, owners of Baydons Wood, support the designation as it relates to Baydons Wood. The Wood is listed on DEFRA Magic Map as National Forest Inventory (GB) Woodland, Young trees.

Chippenham Borough Lands, owners of Baydons Meadow, support the designation as it relates to Baydons Meadow. Baydons Meadow is a hay meadow full of wild flowers and managed for wildlife by a community volunteer group: Baydons Meadow Wildlife Group. For further information on the Group and Meadow please visit: <https://baydonsmeadow.org.uk/>

26 members of the local community named LGS B as their favourite Local Green Space in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results). This was the favourite Local Green Space referred to overall by Questionnaire respondents. Specific comments made by the local community in response to Question 18 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire demonstrate the special value of the site for its richness and variety of wildlife and habitats, recreation (for walkers, dog walkers, picnics and children using the play area), tranquility, beauty and flood alleviation. The evidence for such is set out below:

“Biodiversity enhanced over many years by a band of volunteers”

“I have helped there for many years and have seen how it has improved over that time, wildflowers especially.”

“This is an attempt by local volunteers to halt the decline in common 'natural' flora and fauna.”

“This is one of the few large areas on the outskirts of the town which has escaped the ravages of unsympathetic development, and a large unspoilt area accessible to 50% of residents has grown in popularity for walkers, wildlife and tranquillity.” (comment also in relation to LGS WW and FF)

“These areas are very special, they have a lot of wildlife in them, Muntjac deer are seen a lot, there’s pheasants, there is also a lot of hedgehogs and many birds species. I have lived here for 30+ years, these areas are very special to the local people, the green spaces have walnut trees, conker trees which attracts people to the area to pick them. My children and grand children played and play in this open space. It is a very beautiful spot in Chippenham

with lots of natural beauty, please don't take these areas away for the locals and visitors."
(comment also in relation to LGS WW)

"This is a beautiful area, adjacent to the river. There is an abundance of wildlife including badgers, foxes and numerous species of wild birds. The land is subject to flooding during wet spells and there is always lots of wading birds that appear too. The adjacent fields are used daily by numerous dog walkers and it is a popular walking area for ramblers too. This space is a wildlife haven, peaceful and scenic."

"These areas are used extensively by children and adults both playing relaxing in the areas and as part of the green through route. From personal observation it is rare for there not to be someone in the area throughout daylight hours and frequently significant numbers are to be found. Dog and recreational walkers form a significant part of this use and many of these are to be found before and after daylight, extending the period when this area is in use and valued."

"It is beautiful to have open green space for my & other families to enjoy. Wildlife is abundant, we've even seen deer!" (comment also in relation to LGS WW)

"The green space in Long Close should be protected. Local children play there, including my own son and there are many species of wildlife living in this area, including bats. The green space is tranquil and spaces like this are vital for physical and mental wellbeing."

"I have lived by Long Close for nearly 27 years, my children grew up playing on what we call The Green, where they played with their friends until it got dark; where we and so many others walk our dogs; where now other children play and we take our grandchildren down to play. So many people enjoy this beautiful green space, it's such a lovely area not just for people but animals and creatures of all kinds having seen things like hedgehogs, butterflies, cuckoo's, and even muntjac deer. People from all over use the space and benefit from it. There's benches a park, and now even a goal post, how my boys would have loved to have had one there when they were younger! It's so important to preserve and protect this special green space."

"It's been so good for the local children and now grandchildren. A safe place to play and have picnics, we see muntjac, foxes, badgers all sorts of birds. So much nicer than staying in bedrooms playing video games. Healthy and educational. Just what we want for our future generations."

"The area is widely used by the public for recreation and is rich with wildlife. The land also contributes considerably to reducing the rainwater run off the the river Avon and potential flooding lower down the river."

"As a resident of Long Close I value the immediate environment for several reasons. It is a beautiful spot that affords a close connection with nature immediately on the doorstep. The biodiversity, including the meadow, is important for plants and pollinators, and brings in wildlife. I have lived here for 13 years and in that time have observed foxes, hedgehogs, roe deer and muntjacs. It also provides an haven for a variety of birds including woodpeckers, and the occasional bird of prey!"

I regularly walk in this area with family and friends to enjoy the local countryside and decompress from the stresses of work, and especially over the last two years from the anxiety around the pandemic.

The area enables me to exercise in a safe, natural environment and I take my young nieces and nephews for walks or cycle rides without the need to worry about traffic, while teaching them about the countryside.

The space is also used extensively by dog walkers, families - particularly the park and goal posts - and those wishing to exercise such as runners and cyclists, or those just wishing to gently ramble and enjoy the surrounding area. This has been invaluable green space and has provided access to nature for many residents during lockdowns restrictions."

"I regularly walk in the green space between Long Close, Baydons Wood/Meadow and the land beyond Hardens Mead including the Cycle Path. Engaging with nature helps quieten my mind and improves my mental health. I often take my niece and nephews with me to look at the wildlife along the river and to spot the different plants and trees as they change through the seasons. These walks help them to understand the importance of nature and the world around them. It's also good exercise for us. These areas are also well used by our immediate neighbours and opportunities to walk in these public spaces give us chance to meet and socialise, something that wouldn't happen otherwise. The wider community including people from the Pewsham Estate also visit these spaces for dog walking, running and picnics."

"I daily use these areas for dog walking, wildlife spotting, photography and general relaxation and fresh air. These areas are close to where I live and I often use them for a circular walk. I find it very beneficial to have somewhere like this to enjoy within walking distance rather than having to travel by car to find somewhere similar." (comment also in relation to LGS FF and WW)

"I work from home and walk virtually every day in through the green spaces B, D, A and FF. One of the most special features of Chippenham to me is the way that the countryside is bought into the town centre through these green corridors." (comment also in relation to LGS D, A and FF)

"It's a very peaceful and relaxing place to be. I've seen kingfishers, woodpeckers and red kites all in this small area."

"These 3 together provide a green space which can be walked in a loop when crossing the river at the old railway line. I spend a lot of the watching the kingfishers who live in the river banks, herons, bats and owls, and all other wildlife. There is diversity with the river, meadow, and with the new trees planted and being planted this is set to get even better. Larger spaces like this are vastly important for mental health, to be able to feel that you are within nature." (comment also in relation to LGS FF and WW)

"As I live on Hardens Mead it is a lovely link to the town & Monkton Park, following the river. It is peaceful & the Meadow is beautiful at various times of the year & you can hear birdsong."

“This area brings the county into town and almost to my door. I use it regularly for walking and together with the cycle route gives recreational access to the world beyond” (comment also in relation to LGS WW)

“Baydons Wood. Habitat for wildlife. Needs looking after. Please don’t hack trees!”

“Baydons Meadow - managed for wildlife - and riverside”

Local in Character

The landowner has objected to the proposed LGS on the basis that they consider this green space would be an extensive tract of land, especially when combined with LGS WW.

LGS B would have a site area of 5.75ha. A 2022 report by CPRE found that the size of LGS’s across the UK varied greatly, ranging in size from as much as 46.5ha to as little as 0.001ha¹. Planning Practice Guidance confirms ‘there are no hard and fast rules about how big an LGS can be because all places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed’². In the recently made 2021 Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan seven of the eleven LGS’s designated were of a size in excess of what is being proposed in this instance, with four of their LGS’s being 22ha+ in size, two of which (Sites C and D) were located on the fringe of the urban area and adjacent to countryside³.

LGS B has clearly defined edges, these being: the River Avon, Long Close and the houses fronting on to the green space, and fenced boundaries to wooded areas at eastern and north western ends. It therefore has an enclosed feel, which is local in character and scale.

The LGS can be broken down into four main areas: Baydons Wood, Baydons Meadow, Long Close Recreation Area, and the wooded area at the eastern of the site. These flow seamlessly into one another and all are physically connected through Public Right of Way CHIP14 or other unofficial rights of way. All of these areas are semi-urban, managed spaces, and none is farmland. LGS B is clearly not countryside.

The fence running along the eastern perimeter of the wooded area located at the eastern end of LGS B, marks the boundary where LGS B ends and LGS WW begins. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered that these two LGS’s had distinct and different identities. Hence the rationale for keeping them separate. LGS B comprises of smaller areas of managed woodland, recreational area and meadow, and LGS WW is predominately open farmland. Notwithstanding, if it was considered more suitable to amalgamate LGS B and LGS WW into a single LGS the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does not consider this new LGS, being 15.75ha in size, would represent an extensive tract of land, due to its size and having clearly defined edges of hedgerows, the River Avon, roads/tracks and housing.

¹ Local Green Space - a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing, CPRE, 2022, p. 13

² Planning Practice Guidance: open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 6 March 2014.

³ Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan Appendices, Bracknell Town Council, 2021.

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-area>

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner is of the opinion that the Long Close recreation area may offer an opportunity for sustainable development.

Some of the land at the northern end of the site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3, and would therefore be unsuitable for development.

The remaining majority of the grassed recreation area, which includes a children's play area, was likely developed to serve the residents of the Long Close estate which adjoins. The loss of public open space for these residents would be harmful to their amenity and unsustainable. There are no similar sites in the vicinity of Long Close which could perform the same public open space function for the Long Close community as well as the current site.

There are no historic or extent planning permissions for development on this site, nor has the site been allocated for development either in the current Local Plan or emerging Local Plan.

The future non-LGS use proposed by the landowner can be better met elsewhere at future proposed sites allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. at Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁴.

Conclusion

The evidence from the local community, set out above, demonstrates that this semi-urban green space is demonstrably special in terms of its wildlife value, community value and recreational value. It is located immediately adjacent to the Long Close residential estate and serves this residential community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 5.75ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, the alternative non-LGS use of part of the site as put forward by the landowner, would not outweigh the harm to adjoining local residents incurred by the loss of public open space, which has demonstrable recreational value. The future non-LGS use proposed by the landowner can be better met elsewhere at future development sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan. The site is unlikely to come forward in the future for development given there are no historic or extant planning permissions for such, nor is the land allocated for development in either the current or emerging Local Plans. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS B.**

⁴ Wiltshire Council Local Plan - Planning for Chippenham, Wiltshire Council, 2021.

LGS F - Broomfield Open Space

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not supportive - likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS F was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner’s Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore affordable housing opportunities on part of LGS F. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so.

Given the site is only 0.55ha in size, it is difficult to see how it would be able to accommodate many affordable dwellings whilst still retaining some public open space and not harming the amenity of residents which front on to the space.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the estate, but it has been public open space since the Hill Rise residential estate was developed, with residential houses on Broomfield and Oaklands fronting on to the space, and the green space now having the intended or unintended design function of a public square.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS F could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁵.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Oaklands and Broomfield, and serves the wider Hill Rise residential community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.55ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be

⁵ Ibid.

afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS F.**

LGS G - Oaklands Open Space

Objection from GreenSquareAccord

'We are the landowner of both green spaces identified in this area. We are happy for the southernmost area, located next to the bungalows at 88-102a Oaklands, to be designated as Local Green Space. However, we request that the northernmost area, located next to 104-128 Oaklands, not be designated as Local Green Space. There are no specific plans at this time, but we would like to keep flexibility on this piece of land in the future.'

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS G was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation value and amenity value, with some wildlife value from its mature trees, including a prominent line of coniferous trees planted on the southern half (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner has objected to the northern half of the site being designated as Local Green Space and would prefer flexibility to be retained on this piece of land in the future, having no specific plans for it at this current time.

Given the lack of any specified intended use by the landowner, the northern half of the site being only 0.14ha in size, Nos. 104-126 Oaklands fronting on to the green space, and a public right of way (CHIP54) serving these properties, it is very difficult to see how this site could be satisfactorily developed with any buildings in the future which would not either a) harm the amenity of existing residents e.g. overlooking, loss of outlook, light etc. and/or b) result in a poor urban design layout.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for development of the site in either current or emerging Local Plans.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Oaklands, and serves the wider Hill Rise residential community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.27ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than any unspecified non-LGS future use the landowner is requesting. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS G.**

LGS H - Barrow Green and Hill Rise Open Space

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Supportive - land at Hill Rise. Not supportive - land at Barrow Green as likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS H was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation value, particularly Barrow Green which contains a children’s play area. It was also recognised as having amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner’s Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore future affordable housing opportunities on the Barrow Green part of LGS H. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so.

Given the site is only 0.5ha in size, it is difficult to see how a satisfactory layout would be achieved which would accommodate many affordable dwellings, particularly given the site’s topography and potential for harm to the amenity of residents of Barrow Green which front on to the space.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the estate, but it has been public open space since the Hill Rise residential estate was developed, with residential houses on Barrow Green fronting on to the space, and the green space now having the intended or unintended design function of a public square. Being located at the top of the hill, this green space has become a local landscape feature which can be seen some distance away. Similarly, one of the benefits of being in this green space are the commanding views to the north-west.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS H could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁶.

⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Barrow Green and Hill Rise, and serves the wider Hill Rise residential community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.7ha in total size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS H.**

LGS O - Redland Open Space

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not supportive - likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS O was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner’s Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore future affordable housing opportunities on part of LGS O. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so.

Given the small size of the site, at only 0.33ha in size, it is difficult to see how it would be able to accommodate an acceptable layout for both affordable dwellings and retained public open space, without the rear of any new buildings being visible from the public realm and resulting in poor urban design, or harming the amenity of existing residents at Redland or Brook Street, which front on to the space.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the estate, but it has been public open space since the estate was developed, with residential houses on Redland and Brook Street fronting on to the space, and the green space now having the intended or unintended design function of a public square.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for its development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS O could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁷.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Redland and Brook Street, and serves the wider Hill Rise residential community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.33ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

⁷ Ibid.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS O.**

LGS P - Clifton Close/Boothmead Open Space

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

'Not supportive - likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.'

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS P was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore future affordable housing opportunities on part of LGS P. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so.

Given the size of the site, at 0.61ha, it is difficult to see how it would be able to accommodate an acceptable layout for both affordable dwellings and retained public open space, particularly because the larger area of green space is landlocked by the rear of existing houses fronting on to Clifton Close, Brook Street and Boothmead. Therefore a new access (and parking opportunities) would be required to serve any new dwellings, which would eat into this LGS. Any new dwellings may harm the amenity of the aforementioned occupiers of these houses through loss of light, outlook or overlooking. LGS P also has public rights of way (CHIP66) running through its middle and around its perimeter, the former providing a shortcut for residents to walk from Brook Street to Redland local shopping parade.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the estate, but it has been public open space since the estate was developed, with the front and rear of houses on Clifton Close, Brook Street and Boothmead immediately adjoining the space.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for its development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS H could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁸.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Redland, Brook Street, Boothmead and Clifton Close. The site is self-contained,

⁸ Ibid.

has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.61ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS P.**

LGS U - Allington Way

Objection from GreenSquareAccord

'We are the landowner of this area. While we support the overall Local Green Spaces initiative, we request that this particular piece of land not be designated. The green space at Allington Way is bordered by bungalows, also within our ownership, which have no on plot parking. We submitted a planning application for a parking area on this site in 2019, and would potentially look to revisit this application in the future, taking into account the parking needs of residents at the time whilst also addressing the more recent push toward the electrification of vehicles. In terms of environmental impact, parking spaces can be designed to be environmentally sensitive which would tie into the broader aims of the Local Green Spaces initiative, that being a commitment to zero carbon.'

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS U was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). It was also listed by one member of the local community as their favourite Local Green Space (amongst others) in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire for the site to accommodate off-street parking for residents at Allington Way, along the lines of a 2019 planning permission for such development, and therefore object to this LGS designation.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group recognised the landowner's proposals for the site, and decided to adjust the site area of LGS U prior to the publication of the Pre-Submission Draft Plan to exclude the approved car parking areas proposed by the landowner from the LGS, despite the planning permission for such (18/11727/FUL) having already expired without being implemented. It is considered that the revised site area of proposed LGS U (now 0.13ha as opposed to 0.17ha) presents a suitable compromise, which still meets the landowners need for off-street car parking spaces for residents at Allington Way to be accommodated in the future. The whole of the site is not required for off-street parking, and consent would unlikely be forthcoming for such given the detrimental impact this would have on visual amenity amongst other things.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to the residents of Allington Way. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.13ha in size does not represent an extensive tract of land. The adjusted smaller site area of LGS U means that off-street parking could still be provided on the wider

site at some point in the future should the landowner decide to implement a similar scheme to the 2019 consent.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS U.**

LGS V - Little Battens Park

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not supportive - likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS V was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation value, as a well-used and established park, accommodating a sports court and children’s play area (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). It was also listed by one member of the local community as their favourite Local Green Space (amongst others) in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results).

There are 31 public reviews of Little Battens Park which can be found on Google, with a review rating of 4.4 out of 5. Some of the comments include:

“Great park with good expanse of open grass recreation field, a multi-games enclosed tarmac space and a playground with enough play equipment to satisfy the children for an hour or so! It’s a really useful space and large enough to exercise the dogs, the health conscious, the youth and the kids. The only things missing are enough benches and shade...other than that, it’s generally well kept.”

“Good equipment for all ages”

“Local playground in good working state”

“Nice facility to walk dogs and has a basketball/football area”

“Well look after great place to go”

“Dog walk”

“Beautiful”

Landowner’s Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore future affordable housing opportunities on part of LGS V. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so. It is likely that an access road would have to be created to serve any affordable housing development, which would eat into the green space.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the estate, but it has been a park and recreation ground for many years and is therefore well established.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for its development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS H could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham⁹.

Conclusion

The evidence from the local community, set out above, demonstrates that this well used park, sports court and children's play area is demonstrably special in terms of its recreational value. LGS V is located immediately adjacent to residents of Barken Road and Manor Road, but the recreational facilities serve a much wider local community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 0.94ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS V.**

⁹ Ibid.

LGS RR - Open Space Adjacent to Indoor Bowls Club

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not supported - as landowner we consider does not meet the tests as extensive tract of land (especially combined with LGS SS). May offer opportunity for sustainable development, likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS RR was demonstrably special to the local community for its tranquility and recreation value, for dog walkers and other physical activities (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). It was also listed by one member of the local community as their favourite Local Green Space in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results), commenting that it was special to them because it was *“Nearby and essential for regular exercise with family.”* The LGS is also known locally as Westcroft Park or Westcroft Playing Field.

Local in Character

The landowner has objected to the proposed LGS on the basis that they consider this green space would be an extensive tract of land, especially when combined with LGS SS.

LGS RR would have a site area of only 1.8ha. A 2022 report by CPRE found that the size of LGS’s across the UK varied greatly, ranging in size from as much as 46.5ha to as little as 0.001ha¹⁰. Planning Practice Guidance confirms ‘there are no hard and fast rules about how big an LGS can be because all places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed’¹¹. In the recently made 2021 Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan seven of the eleven LGS’s designated were of a size in excess of what is being proposed in this instance, with four of their LGS’s being 22ha+ in size¹².

LGS RR has clearly defined edges, these being: Hungerdown Lane (west), Nos. 13-24 Westcroft (south), Bridleway CHIP35 (north) and North Wiltshire Bowls Club (east). It therefore has an enclosed feel, which is local in character and scale.

Bridleway CHIP35 exits the site in the north east corner and continues to run for approximately 240m in an easterly direction connecting into LGS SS, and extending again beyond to the A4. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered that LGS RR and LGS SS had distinct and different identities. Hence the rationale for keeping them separate. LGS RR comprises of a level, unmarked playing field, whilst LGS SS has more of a parkland character with undulating topography interspersed with mature trees and contains a children’s play area and adjacent community hall. Notwithstanding, if it was considered more suitable to

¹⁰ Local Green Space - a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing, CPRE, 2022, p. 13

¹¹ Planning Practice Guidance: open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 6 March 2014.

¹² Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan Appendices, Bracknell Town Council, 2021.
<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-area>

amalgamate LGS RR and LGS SS into a single LGS the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does not consider this new LGS, being 3.85ha in size, would represent an extensive tract of land due to its size and having clearly defined edges of roads, houses, North Wiltshire Bowls Club, and Bath Road Industrial Estate.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner is of the opinion that the site may offer an opportunity for sustainable development.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as playing field to meet the needs of nearby residents, but it has been an unmarked playing field for recreational use many years. The loss of this playing field for the adjoining residents of Hungerdown Lane, Southmead and Westcroft would be harmful to their amenity. There are no similar level sites in the vicinity of the site which could perform the same playing field function for the local community as well as the current site. LGS SS has an undulating topography and therefore could not be used in the same way.

There are no historic or extent planning permissions for development on this site, nor has the site been allocated for development either in the current Local Plan or emerging Local Plan.

The future non-LGS use proposed by the landowner can be better met elsewhere at future proposed sites allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham¹³.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational value and tranquility. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Hungerdown Lane, Southmead and Westcroft. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 1.8ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS RR.**

¹³ Wiltshire Council Local Plan - Planning for Chippenham, Wiltshire Council, 2021.

LGS SS - Kingsley Road Field

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

‘Not supported - as landowner we consider does not meet the tests as extensive tract of land (especially combined with LGS RR). May offer opportunity for sustainable development, likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS SS was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational value, accommodating a children’s play area, and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). It was listed by one member of the local community as their favourite Local Green Space (amongst others) in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results).

There are 10 public reviews of Kingsley Rd Field which can be found on Google, with a review rating of 4.8 out of 5. Some of the comments include:

“Popular dog walking field with a small fenced off children's playground.”

“Regularly walk my dog here and meet lots of other friendly dog walkers.”

“Good field for the kids and nice to have a picnic or barbecue.”

“Lovely open space.”

Kingsley Road Community Hall is located immediately adjacent to LGS SS, making for a hub that has both indoor and outdoor community facilities. There may be some community groups who use LGS SS for events/groups in association with the Hall, particularly when the weather is good during summer months.

Local in Character

The landowner has objected to the proposed LGS on the basis that they consider this green space would be an extensive tract of land, especially when combined with LGS RR.

LGS SS would have a site area of only 1.78ha. A 2022 report by CPRE found that the size of LGS’s across the UK varied greatly, ranging in size from as much as 46.5ha to as little as 0.001ha¹⁴. Planning Practice Guidance confirms ‘there are no hard and fast rules about how big an LGS can be because all places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed’¹⁵. In the recently made 2021 Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan seven of the eleven LGS’s designated were of a size in excess of what is being proposed in this instance, with four of their LGS’s being 22ha+ in size¹⁶.

¹⁴ Local Green Space - a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing, CPRE, 2022, p. 13

¹⁵ Planning Practice Guidance: open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 6 March 2014.

¹⁶ Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan Appendices, Bracknell Town Council, 2021.
<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-area>

LGS SS has clearly defined edges, these being: houses on Southmead (west), Kingsley Road Community Hall (north), houses on Kingsley Road (east) and Bath Road Industrial Estate (south). It therefore has an enclosed feel, which is local in character and scale.

Bridleway CHIP35 exits the site in the south west corner and continues to run for approximately 240m in a westerly direction connecting into LGS RR, and extending again beyond to Hungerdown Lane. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered that LGS SS and LGS RR had distinct and different identities. Hence the rationale for keeping them separate. LGS SS has a parkland character with manmade undulating topography interspersed with mature trees, and contains a children's play area and adjacent community centre. In contrast LGS RR comprises of a level, unmarked playing field. Notwithstanding, if it was considered more suitable to amalgamate LGS SS and LGS RR into a single LGS the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does not consider this new LGS, being 3.85ha in size, would represent an extensive tract of land due to its size and having clearly defined edges of roads, houses, North Wiltshire Bowls Club, and Bath Road Industrial Estate.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner is of the opinion that the site may offer an opportunity for sustainable development.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as a public open space to meet the needs of nearby residents, but it has been public open space in recreational use many years. The loss of this public open space for the adjoining residents of Southmead and Hungerdown Lane would be harmful to their amenity and unsustainable.

Given the rear of houses on Kingsley Road and Southmead immediately adjoin the site, a new access road would need to be created into the site in order to serve any future development. This would eat into the green space. New development also has the potential to compromise the amenity of adjoining occupiers through loss of light, overlooking or loss of outlook, this being more of any issue when new development backs on to existing rear gardens.

There are no similar sites in the vicinity which could perform the parkland function for the local community as well as the current site. LGS RR is a level playing field, with no trees or undulating topography and therefore could not be used in the same way.

There are no historic or extent planning permissions for development on this site, nor has the site been allocated for development either in the current Local Plan or emerging Local Plan.

The future non-LGS use proposed by the landowner can be better met elsewhere at future proposed sites allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham¹⁷.

Conclusion

The evidence from the local community, set out above, demonstrates that this well used public open space and children's play area is demonstrably special in terms of its recreational value. LGS SS is located immediately adjacent to residents of Southmead and Kingsley Road,

¹⁷ Wiltshire Council Local Plan - Planning for Chippenham, Wiltshire Council, 2021.

but the recreational facilities, along with the adjacent Community Hall, serve a much wider local community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 1.78ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS SS.**

LGS VV - Ladyfield Road Large Square

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing:

‘Not supportive - likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.’

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, mostly comprising members of the local community, considered LGS VV was demonstrably special to the local community for its recreation and amenity value (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This LGS has significant potential for future enhancements e.g. biodiversity improvements, tree planting, recreation equipment etc. in consultation with the desires of the local community.

Landowner’s Preferred Future Use

The landowner has expressed their desire to explore future affordable housing opportunities on part of LGS VV. The landowner has not provided the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with any indicative proposals to show how the site could be successfully developed for affordable housing, nor is it understood to have any plans to do so.

Given the size of the site, at only 0.36ha, it is difficult to see how it would be able to accommodate an acceptable layout for both affordable dwellings and retained public open space, without exposing the rear gardens of any new dwellings to the public realm, which would represent poor urban design.

It is not known whether the land was intended to have been historically developed for housing or retained as public open space to meet the needs of residents of the Ladyfield Road estate, but it has been public open space since the estate was developed, with residential houses on Ladyfield Road fronting on to the space, and the green space now having the intended or unintended design function of a public square.

There are no historic or extant planning permissions for development of this site, or no allocation for its development in either current or emerging Local Plans.

The future affordable housing use proposed by the landowner on LGS H could be better met elsewhere, and in quantity, at future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan e.g. Site 1 - East Chippenham and Site 2 - South Chippenham¹⁸.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Topic Group, which comprised of members of the local community, concluded that this urban green space is demonstrably special to the local community for its recreational and amenity value. It is located immediately adjacent to residents of Ladyfield Road. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at only 0.36ha in size, does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be

¹⁸ Ibid.

afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, for which there are currently no proposals and for which future proposed site allocations in the emerging Local Plan could better accommodate. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS VV.**

LGS WW - Open Space Adjacent to Long Close/Hardens Mead

Objection from Wiltshire Council Housing

'All but the land as edged red on the attached plan is held as part of the Rural Estate as a dairy farm and is not recognised as open space. As landowner we consider does not meet the tests as extensive tract of land (especially combined with LGS B). Area edged red likely to be retained land from historic housing stock transfer, opportunity to explore for affordable housing purposes on part of site.'

This is existing agricultural land as LGS with the only access to the land through established formal Rights of Way, meaning that enjoyment as recreational space is not available.

Proposed allocation of Site WW as a LGS may also contradict the aspirations for standalone renewable energy infrastructure, as set out in 5.37.'

Objection from Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning

Although not an objection from the landowner we are also seeking to address the following objection by Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning in this document:

'Many of the proposals do satisfy the criteria. However, this isn't the case for Site WW. Site WW is a large site currently in agricultural use and it is considered that it does not comply with criteria c. because it is not local in character and is an extensive tract of land. Remove Site WW from the Local Green Space proposals.'

Evidence of Special Value to the Local Community

As part of the Regulation 18 Consultation of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan, and in response to the proposed site allocation of land at East Chippenham in this emerging Plan, a petition in support of designating land to the north of Hardens Mead as a LGS was submitted to Wiltshire Council by the Hardens Mead local community. The petition had 65 signatures and the redacted version can be viewed in full at Insert 1 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan. All but one of the 65 petitioners lived on Hardens Mead.

Wiltshire Council advised the petitioners to submit their evidence to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which they did in March 2021. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered the site suitable for Local Green Space designation when assessed using the same Local Green Space Assessment Tool that the Neighbourhood Plan's Green Infrastructure Topic Group had used (see Table 2 of Appendix 8 of the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan). This was largely because of the evidence of wildlife, recreational, beauty and tranquility value of this green space to the Hardens Mead community, as demonstrated by petitioners.

Evidence of a rich and varied wildlife in the two large fields of LGS WW is cited by petitioners. In summary, these fields are frequented by red kites, kestrels, buzzards and tawny owls. Foxes, deer, moles, newts and badgers (a badger's set is present on the site) have been observed. Pipistrelle bats inhabit the trees along the southern perimeter of the field. Substantial hedgerows along the western, northern and south western parts of the fields are inhabited by birds and mammals.

LGS WW is accessed by three public rights of way - CHIP111, CHIP14 and CHIP50. Evidence of the site's recreational value by petitioners includes use by dog walkers, school children on the way to and from Abbeyfield School, picnic-ers who use the height of the field to take in the views of the River Avon and the town, sledgers in the winter, and children and adults playing informal sport on the green space.

Petitioners also cited the beauty of LGS WW - with wide ranging views over the Avon valley, and its tranquility - with its segregation from the urban space by trees, hedgerow and relief of the terrain.

In addition to the petition, 11 members of the local community named LGS WW as their favourite Local Green Space in response to Question 17 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire (please refer to the table on Page 16 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Survey Results). Specific comments made by the local community in response to Question 18 of the Regulation 14 Consultation Questionnaire demonstrate the special value of the site for its richness and variety of wildlife and habitats, recreation (for walkers, dog walkers, and children's play), tranquility and beauty. The evidence for such is set out below:

"This is a beautiful open area with views that stretch out to hills in the distance and the river below. I regularly walk along the river bank up to the Black Bridge and meet many people doing the same. There are hares and deer (sometimes) in the fields, and rabbits at the far end.

It is a tranquil area that soothes the heart and mind."

"Recreational purposes for children, wildlife and overall wellbeing"

"We use this space multiple times a week, it provides solace and tranquility for our family. It teaches children about nature and is a vital part of psychological attention restoration theory."

"This is one of the few large areas on the outskirts of the town which has escaped the ravages of unsympathetic development, and a large unspoilt area accessible to 50% of residents has grown in popularity for walkers, wildlife and tranquillity." (comment also in relation to LGS FF and B)

"I daily use these areas for dog walking, wildlife spotting, photography and general relaxation and fresh air. These areas are close to where I live and I often use them for a circular walk. I find it very beneficial to have somewhere like this to enjoy within walking distance rather than having to travel by car to find somewhere similar." (comment also in relation to LGS FF and B)

"These areas are very special, they have a lot of wildlife in them, Muntjac deer are seen a lot, there's pheasants, there is also a lot of hedgehogs and many birds species. I have lived here for 30+ years, these areas are very special to the local people, the green spaces have walnut trees, conker trees which attracts people to the area to pick them. My children and grand children played and play in this open space. It is a very beautiful spot in Chippenham with lots of natural beauty, please don't take these areas away for the locals and visitors." (comment also in relation to LGS B)

“It is beautiful to have open green space for my & other families to enjoy. Wildlife is abundant, we’ve even seen deer!” (comment also in relation to LGS B)

“These 3 together provide a green space which can be walked in a loop when crossing the river at the old railway line. I spend a lot of the watching the kingfishers who live in the river banks, herons, bats and owls, and all other wildlife. There is diversity with the river, meadow, and with the new trees planted and being planted this is set to get even better. Larger spaces like this are vastly important for mental health, to be able to feel that you are within nature.” (comment also in relation to LGS FF and B)

“This area brings the county into town and almost to my door. I use it regularly for walking and together with the cycle route gives recreational access to the world beyond” (comment also in relation to LGS B)

“I regularly walk in the green space between Long Close, Baydons Wood/Meadow and the land beyond Hardens Mead including the Cycle Path. Engaging with nature helps quieten my mind and improves my mental health. I often take my niece and nephews with me to look at the wildlife along the river and to spot the different plants and trees as they change through the seasons. These walks help them to understand the importance of nature and the world around them. It’s also good exercise for us. These areas are also well used by our immediate neighbours and opportunities to walk in these public spaces give us chance to meet and socialise, something that wouldn’t happen otherwise.

The wider community including people from the Pewsham Estate also visit these spaces for dog walking, running and picnics.” (comment also in relation to LGS B)

Local in Character

The landowner and Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning have objected to LGS WW on the basis that they consider this green space would be an extensive tract of land, especially when combined with LGS B.

LGS WW would have a site area of 10.1ha. A 2022 report by CPRE found that the size of LGS’s across the UK varied greatly, ranging in size from as much as 46.5ha to as little as 0.001ha¹⁹. Planning Practice Guidance confirms ‘there are no hard and fast rules about how big an LGS can be because all places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed’²⁰. In the recently made 2021 Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan seven of the eleven LGS’s designated were of a size in excess of what is being proposed in this instance, with four of their LGS’s being 22ha+ in size, two of which (Sites C and D) were located on the fringe of the urban area and adjacent to countryside²¹, similar to the situation here.

¹⁹ Local Green Space - a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing, CPRE, 2022, p. 13

²⁰ Planning Practice Guidance: open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 6 March 2014.

²¹ Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan Appendices, Bracknell Town Council, 2021.
<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-area>

LGS WW has clearly defined edges, these being: the Canoe and Sailing Club grounds and wooded area (west), hedgerow field boundaries (north), Hardens Lane (east) and Abbeyfield School playing field and houses at Hardens Mead and Long Close (south). The lack of individual trees (except along boundaries) and sloping topography down to the River Avon afford open vistas across the site. This, together with the legible boundaries to the site, allow for extensive views of the vast majority of the site to be appreciated when walking along the public footpaths that cross the site, and therefore for the site to feel local in character.

The fence running along the eastern perimeter of the wooded area located at the western end of LGS WW marks the boundary where LGS WW ends and LGS B begins. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered that these two LGS's had distinct and different identities. Hence the rationale for keeping them separate. LGS WW is predominately open farmland, whereas LGS B comprises of smaller areas of managed woodland, recreational area and meadow. Notwithstanding, if it was considered more suitable to amalgamate LGS WW and LGS B into a single LGS the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group does not consider this new LGS, being 15.75ha in size, would represent an extensive tract of land, due to its size and having clearly defined edges of hedgerows, the River Avon, roads/tracks and housing.

Landowner's Preferred Future Use

The landowner states that the two large fields, which comprise of the majority of LGS WW, are held as part of the Rural Estate as a dairy farm and is not recognised as open space, with the only access to the land through established formal Rights of Way, meaning that enjoyment as recreational space is not available.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group dispute that recreational use of this green space is not available, when there are three public rights of way running through the space. This allows for the space to be accessed legally for recreational use by walkers/dog walkers, and as can be seen in the evidence supplied by petitioners, more informally for other activities such as play, picnics, sledging etc.

The petition submitted by the Hardens Mead community explains "The use is of course often impacted by grazing cattle, but humans and cattle coexist in use of the space. Effectively the land is utilised as 'common land.' Indeed, nearly all Hardens Mead properties that adjoin the Field have direct access to it, which the farmer supports and maintains through stiles and gaps in the perimeter wire".

The access afforded by public rights of way also allow for the space to be appreciated for its beauty, tranquility and wildlife value. In any case, Paragraph 17 of Planning Practice Guidance on Open Space makes it clear that 'land can be considered for designation even if there is no public access (e.g. green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty)' so public access should not in itself be an issue in assessing Local Green Space designation.

The landowner, and Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning, object to the Local Green Space designation based on the existing agricultural use of the land. However, there is nothing in the NPPF or Planning Practice Guidance which states that agricultural land cannot be designated as Local Green Space. Designation would not prevent its continued use for agricultural purposes.

Although not specified in their objection it is assumed that the landowner's preferred use of the site is for residential development, in line with Wiltshire Council's concept plan produced for mixed use development at Site 1 - East Chippenham in the Regulation 18 draft of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan²². It should also be noted that there is an extant planning application (15/12363/OUT) for residential development on the site as part of a wider mixed-use scheme, although it is understood that no progress has been made with regard to determining this application in the seven years since submission, and the Case Officer has previously confirmed in writing that no positive determination will be made on the application without further publicity and consultation.

The landowner's preferred future use of the site for residential development is considered not to be practical or sustainable for a number of reasons. These are explained in more detail in the petition by the residents of Hardens Mead, but include: a) it would result in the loss of agricultural land, which is becoming increasingly valued for domestic sustainable food production in a market where food exports are becoming increasingly expensive/volatile; b) it would likely harm the amenity of residents of Hardens Mead who immediately adjoin the open space through loss of light, overlooking, loss outlook etc.; c) the proposed access road off Long Close (which is shown to serve residential development on the site) would result in additional traffic flows and increase congestion and air pollution for existing residents and along a route which children walk to Abbeyfield School; d) the water table on the site is high and there is clay soil which means it is currently prone to surface water accumulation; e) the steep sloping topography of the site does not lend itself to residential development; f) the development would be prominent in long distance views of the landscape from the other side of the River Avon e.g. Monkton Park.

Site 1 - East Chippenham could still be developed with LGS WW being retained. Designating the site as a Local Green Space would have positive impacts for the retention and management of hedgerows, trees and woodland areas as part of a mature landscape framework, it would retain rural views along key public rights of way and particularly open views across the river valley, and it would assist in the creation of the strategic green-blue corridor along the River Avon, protecting the rural landscape setting and existing outlying rural settlement identity and contributing to biodiversity.

The landowner states that the proposed allocation of LGS WW may contradict the aspirations for standalone renewable energy infrastructure, as set out in 5.37 of the Pre-Submission Draft Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan. As Wiltshire Council are not proposing to allocate this site for standalone renewable energy infrastructure it is difficult to see what relevance this has.

The landowner has indicated their preference for affordable housing to be explored on part of the smaller parcel of land located immediately between Hardens Mead and Long Close, and within LGS WW. However, this site would prove to be difficult for development of affordable housing and retained public open space given its small size at 0.64ha in size, triangular shape, surrounding residential properties, the mature trees it contains, the public right of way (CHIP50) which runs through the middle of it linking Hardens Mead and Long Close, and the fact that it is filled with refuse and topped with spoil according to petitioners.

²² Wiltshire Council Local Plan - Planning for Chippenham, Wiltshire Council, 2021, Figure 2.

It appears that this part of LGS WW was always intended to be public open space for the residents of Hardens Mead and Long Close when the estate was built, as evidenced by the correspondence from the Borough Surveyor's Office in 1971 (included in Appendix 3 of the petition by Hardens Mead local community) which states that the land was purchased from the Council on the understanding that it would be used for Open Space purposes.

Conclusion

The evidence and level of support for LGS designation from the local community, set out above, demonstrates that this semi-urban green space is demonstrably special in terms of its wildlife value, recreational value, beauty and tranquility. It is located immediately adjacent to the Hardens Mead and Long Close residential estate and serves this community. The site is self-contained, has clearly defined edges, is local in character, and at 10.1ha in size does not represent an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are of the opinion that in reaching the planning balance on whether this site should be designated as an LGS, greater weight should be afforded to the site meeting the three tests of Paragraph 102 of the NPPF than the proposed non-LGS use put forward by the landowner, which would result in the loss of public open space, which has demonstrable special value for the residents. The future non-LGS use proposed by the landowner can be better accommodated elsewhere on the wider development site allocated in the emerging Local Plan, with less harmful resulting impacts on the natural environment and amenity of existing residents. **For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group propose to retain LGS WW.**