

Fenland District Council Local Green Space Submissions Report

Please note:

At this stage we are not committed to any sites identified in this document. The inclusion of a site in this document does not represent any decision by the Council and does not provide the site with any kind of planning status. They are sites promoted to us, not by us.

February 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report serves two purposes; firstly to explain Fenland District Council's (FDC / the Council) methodology and rationale for assessing and selecting Local Green Spaces (LGS) for designation in the emerging Fenland Local Plan.
- 1.2. Second, this report provides a summary of all green spaces submitted to the Council for our consideration during the Issues & Options consultation, carried out in October and November 2019.

What are Local Green Spaces?

- 1.3. 'Local Green Space' (LGS) is a national designation introduced by the Government through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Local communities have the opportunity through the development of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans to identify green areas for special protection that are of particular importance to them.
- 1.4. The NPPF is clear that LGS designation should only be used where the green space meets certain criteria, discussed in Section 2: Methodology.

Local Green Space Submissions

- 1.5. In October and November 2019 the council consulted on the Fenland Issues & Options document which posed a series of questions relating to local planning issues. As part of the consultation the Council invited residents, parish councils and other stakeholders to suggest green spaces they wish to be considered for designation as LGS through the new Local Plan.
- 1.6. Section 3 provides details of all green spaces suggested to the Council as part of the Issues & Options consultation, and includes a summary report of each. A total of 46 submissions were received, relating to 14 green spaces across 6 parishes.
- 1.7. At this time, the Council has **not** assessed any LGS submissions. The Council will, in due course, assess the submitted green spaces using the methodology in section 2.
- 1.8. **It is important to note, therefore, that inclusion of a green space in this report does not provide the green space with any additional planning status or merit, not does it grant the green space any additional protection from development.**

2. Methodology

National policy context

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies for England, and is accompanied by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which offers 'live' guidance.
- 2.2. NPPF (Para. 99) indicates that, through local and neighbourhood plans, local communities can identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection.
- 2.3. The NPPF (Para. 101) requires local policy for managing development within a LGS should be consistent with Policy for Green Belts. Therefore by designating land as LGS, communities can effectively 'rule out' new development other than in very special circumstances.
- 2.4. The NPPF (Para. 100) is clear that LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:
 - in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
 - local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- 2.5. Further national guidance on LGS is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance¹

LGS Submissions

- 2.6. The NPPF suggests it is the role of local communities to identify green areas for special protection through LGS designation. Para. 99 states:

The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.
- 2.7. In October and November 2019, the Council invited residents, parish councils and other bodies to suggest green areas they wish to be considered for designation as LGSs.
- 2.8. To ensure the process of submitting a green space was straight forward and accessible, the Council encouraged respondents to complete "*Form C – Local Green Space Nomination Form*", or the online form available from the Council's website.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

- 2.9. The forms required respondents to provide certain information about their nominated green space. Crucially, respondents were required to explain the local significance of the green space.
- 2.10. A total of 46 LGS submissions were received during the consultation period, relating to 14 green spaces. Section 3 provides a summary of each LGS submission received.
- 2.11. Each individual's (or organisation's) green space submission has been recorded separately (a summary of which is presented in Appendix 2). There was considerable duplication between the submissions. For example, 33 LGS submissions were received relating to Wenny Road Meadow in Chatteris.

LGS Assessment

- 2.12. Nominated green spaces will be assessed by the Council to determine if the green space meets the criteria set out by national policy and qualifies for designation.
- 2.13. Green space submissions will be taken forward for LGS designation in the emerging Local Plan where:
- The green space fulfils the criteria set out in NPPF para. 100; **and**
 - Where designation of the land as Local Green Space is consistent with the *"local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services"* (as required by NPPF para 99).
- 2.14. Green spaces which do not meet national policy requirements will be rejected.
- 2.15. The Council will only assess green spaces nominated during the consultation exercise. Green spaces which have **not** been nominated to us will not be assessed and will not be considered for LGS designation.
- 2.16. LGS submissions will be assessed against the Criteria set out in Table 1, derived from the NPPF (paras. 99 and 100).
- 2.17. To support the assessment of green spaces, the Council will
- Have regard to the information contained in LGS submissions (i.e. submitted by promoters via the Local Green Space nomination form);
 - Carry out site visits;
 - Undertake a desk based assessment to gather additional information. For example, to establish whether or not sites are subject to existing designations, identify planning history and, more generally, the site's status in relation to emerging Local Plan allocations.

Table 1. Explanation of Assessment Criteria for designating LGSs in Fenland

Local Green Space Criteria	Explanation
1. Are in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	<p>The NPPF does not define ‘close proximity’.</p> <p>We consider that a Local Green Space should be in easy walking distance (for example, within 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and must not be isolated or distant from communities.</p>
2. Are local in character and not an extensive tract of land	<p>The NPPF does not define what is considered to be ‘an extensive tract of land’.</p> <p>We have not set a specific size limit for Local Green Spaces. However, blanket designations of swathes of open countryside adjacent to settlements or long distance linear routes would not be appropriate.</p>
<p>3. Demonstrably special to the local community because of its:</p> <p>a) Beauty b) Historic significance c) Recreational value d) Tranquillity e) Richness of its wildlife f) Or other characteristic</p>	<p>For an open space to be designated as a Local Green Space it must meet at least one of the demonstrably special criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beauty: enhances local character, adds to the setting of a building or groups of buildings; • Historic significance: listed building near or on area/open space, provide the setting of and/or views of listed building or historic assets such as a war memorial whose setting needs protecting. Also historic landscape features, such as ancient trees or old hedgerows; • Recreational value: play area, allotments, informal spaces in housing estates, sports and playing fields; • Tranquillity: spaces that are calm and allow for quiet enjoyment and reflection; • Richness of its wildlife: provides for biodiversity, geodiversity, known protected species, and/or priority habitats; • Other: a characteristic, not listed above, but identified LGS submission and verified through the assessment process. <p>Further explanation of how we will assess sites against the demonstrably special criteria is provided in paras. 2.18 - 2.23 below.</p>
4. Consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.	<p>Local Green Space designations are not normally appropriate for sites with existing planning permission, or allocated in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans for other uses, unless it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space can be incorporated within the site as part of the development.</p>

Application of “demonstrably special” criteria (Criterion 3)

- 2.18. In relation to the five ‘demonstrably special’ criteria set out in criterion 3 (of Table 1), the Council will consider the following:

Beauty

- 2.19. Whether an open space is beautiful can be open to interpretation. Assessment against this criterion will take into account:

- The visual attractiveness of the site as a whole;
- The contribution the site makes to landscape or townscape character and local distinctiveness;
- The contribution the site makes to the physical form and layout of a settlement or neighbourhood;
- Whether the site offers long views through or beyond a settlement or neighbourhood or views of locally valued landmarks.

Historic Significance

- 2.20. The assessment of historic significance will be informed by consideration of:

- Whether the site provides a setting for heritage assets or other locally valued landmarks;
- Whether the site contains any historical features, such as ancient trees;
- Whether the site is associated with a historical figure or event;
- Whether there are any regular, historical events such as a village fete that are regularly held on the site;
- The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.

Recreational Value

- 2.21. Many open spaces will likely meet this criterion. In general, sites should offer a variety of recreational opportunities, formal or informal, and of a good quality.

Tranquillity

- 2.22. The Tranquillity Map prepared by the CPRE² will be used to help identify whether a site is located in an area that can be described as tranquil. Sites need to demonstrate a feeling of remoteness and quiet contemplation for the majority of the site and a general lack of artificial noise such as road traffic or nearby industry.

Richness of Wildlife

- 2.23. Many open spaces offer some benefit to wildlife. For a site to meet this criterion there must be evidence that it is rich in wildlife, such as records, ecological evidence or expert advice. Sites already designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest,

² <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/tranquility-map-england/>

National or Local Nature Reserve will not be considered appropriate for LGS designation as these are considered to be adequately protected by national legislation and other policies in the plan. The site could:

- Include a priority habitat as defined in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Include important landscape features, such as veteran trees, ancient woodland or ancient hedgerows;

Consistency with the local planning of sustainable development

- 2.24. Assessment relating to criterion 4 will involve checking each site against certain information, such as planning history, existing designations and potential conflict with emerging allocations.
- 2.25. The LGS designation is unlikely to be suitable for sites with existing planning permission for development. Where a LGS suggestion is also being considered as a future development site through the Local Plan process, each proposal will continue to be assessed on its own merits.
- 2.26. In addition to LGS designation, there are many other statutory and policy tools already in place protecting certain important green areas. LGS designation is therefore a means of protecting sites which do not already fall under existing statutory designations or protective ownership.
- 2.27. LGS suggestions already covered by the following statutory designations may be excluded from the assessment as there already exists a legislative and policy framework to protect them:
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
 - National Nature Reserves (NNR)
 - Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
 - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
 - Historic Parks and Gardens
 - Town and Village Greens and registered commons
 - Land under protective ownership (e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust, etc.).

3. Submitted Green Spaces

- 3.1. During the Issues & Options consultation (Oct-Nov 19), 46 LGS nominations were received from individuals or organisations. However, within this total were a number of duplicate submissions – i.e. different people nominated the same green space.
- 3.2. Wenny Road Meadow, Chatteris, was nominated by 33 separate submissions. One such submission was accompanied by a petition providing more than a thousand signatures. Little Acre Fen Pocket Park, Chatteris, was nominated in two separate submissions.
- 3.3. In total, 14 unique green spaces were submitted during the consultation. Maps showing the location of submitted green spaces are provided in Appendix 1.
- 3.4. Table 2 lists the green spaces received during the consultation, which will be assessed to determine their suitability for designation.

Table 2. List of Submitted Green Spaces (Issues & Options consultation)

Parish, Settlement	LGS Submission ID(s)	Name of green space	Site area (Ha)
Chatteris CP, Chatteris	60011, 60045	Little Acre Fen Pocket Park	2
Chatteris CP, Chatteris	60001, 60002, 60003, 60009, 60010, 60013, 60014, 60015, 60016, 60017, 60018, 60019, 60020, 60021, 60022, 60023, 60024, 60025, 60026, 60027, 60028, 60029, 60030, 60031, 60032, 60033, 60034, 60035, 60036, 60039, 60040, 60042	Wenny Road Meadow (aka Manor Park, Rickwood's Field and Top Field)	7
Chatteris CP, Chatteris	60041	Part of what's known as the 'Wenny meadow'	2.8
Leverington CP, Leverington	60037	Richmond Way	0.33
March CP, March	60004	Grassed area in Fairfax Way	0.31
March CP, March	60005	Area of grass at The Greys	0.27
March CP, March	60006	Breton Avenue	0.19
March CP, March	60007	Frontage to Upwell Road	0.18
March CP, March	60008	The Sconce	2
March CP, March	60044	Riverside park	11.7
Tydd St Giles CP, Tydd St Giles	60043	Field running the length of Newgate Road Tydd St Giles	4.07
Whittlesey CP, Eastrea	60038	Ex. Pig field Ref F/YR19/0559/O	0.51
Whittlesey CP, Whittlesey	60046	Whittlesea Station Wood	4
Wisbech St Mary CP, Wisbech St Mary	60012	8.5 acre open space, Station Road	3

- 3.5. It is important to note that, at this stage, no assessment has been carried out. Inclusion of a green space in the above table (or wider report) does not provide the green space with any additional planning status or merit.

LGS submission summary reports

- 3.6. For the purposes of openness and transparency, Appendix 2 provides a summary of each of the green space submissions received.
- 3.7. The information presented was supplied by respondents to the consultation and does not constitute the views of the Council. Settlement maps are provided in Appendix 1 to assist in identifying the location of nominated green spaces.

4. Next steps

- 4.1. The findings from the Council's assessment of nominated green spaces will be published alongside the draft Local Plan, and will form part of the plan's evidence base.
- 4.2. Sites considered suitable for designation as LGS will be included in the draft Local Plan, scheduled for consultation in summer 2020. Respondents will be invited to comment on proposed LGS designations as part of that consultation.

Appendix 1 – Settlement maps

Maps showing submitted green spaces, arranged alphabetically by settlement:

- Chatteris
- Eastrea
- Leverington
- March
- Tydd St Giles
- Whittlesey
- Wisbech St Mary

Appendix 2 – Site submission reports

The information presented was supplied by respondents to the consultation and does not constitute the views of the Council.

How to use the summary reports

The following table provides an explanation of the information presented in the summary reports.

Guide to submission summary reports

Report field	Description
Page header	Includes details of submission reference, name of green space, and settlement and parish.
Map	Map of green space, reproduced from map supplied by promoter.
Green Space ID	A unique reference number for each green space submission. As references apply to the submission rather than the green space, the same area of land can have multiple references.
Settlement and parish	The settlement and parish in which the green space is located.
Name and address of green space	Name and approximate street address of green space.
Description of green space	The promoter's description of the main characteristics of the green space.
Site area (ha)	The site area (in hectares), as supplied by the promoter, or measured using the Council's GIS application.
'Demonstrably special' criteria	The main functions the green space serves. Relates to the assessment criteria set out in national policy.
Summary of green space's significance to community	The promoter's explanation of the green space's significance to the community.