

LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION

A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITIES PREPARING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

Introduction

The Natural Environment White Paper ([The Natural Choice](#): securing the value of nature 2011) highlighted “the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities”.

Green spaces, particularly natural green spaces, located close to local people provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits, including –

- improved mental and physical health
- increased social activity
- increased physical activity
- reduced crime
- improvements to children’s learning
- increased voluntary action
- improved community cohesion and sense of belonging
- potential for local food growing
- more attractive places to live, work, play, visit and invest
- enhanced opportunities for wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors
- climate change adaptation for example by flood alleviation

The White Paper recommended that a new Green Areas designation be introduced that would give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces that have significant importance to their local communities.

“We propose that green spaces should be identified in neighbourhood plans and local plans which complement and do not undermine investment in homes, jobs and other essential services. Given the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities the Government considers the new designation should offer suitably strong protection to localised areas that are demonstrably special”

That recommendation was incorporated into the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) as the new designation of Local Green Spaces.

Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit aims to help communities designate Local Green Space through the preparation of neighbourhood plans in a robust, consistent and transparent manner.

The Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF provides the following information on Local Green Space designations -

- 76 *Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*
- 77 *The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:*
- *where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
 - *where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
 - *where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*
- 78 *Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.*

Additional guidance is provided in the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Neighbourhood Plans

Local Green Spaces can be designated through neighbourhood plans. For those preparing neighbourhood plans the text of a model policy is included at Appendix 1.

Criteria for Designation

Any type of green space could be suitable for Local Green Space designation from recreational land with a sports pavilion or the area around a war memorial to allotments or an urban space that provides a tranquil oasis.

As Local Green Space designation means that development is highly unlikely to be permitted on a site, there is a strong possibility that land owners and others will challenge the designation. To meet that challenge the designation must be based on solid evidence that the site meets the relevant criteria. This will be easier to demonstrate if the steps in this toolkit are completed and the relevant evidence provided.

A potential Local Green Space site must meet the criteria set out in the NPPF, and further detailed in the National Planning Practice Guidance. These criteria are not specific – they do not give set distances or areas, but act as guidance which should then be interpreted at a local level.

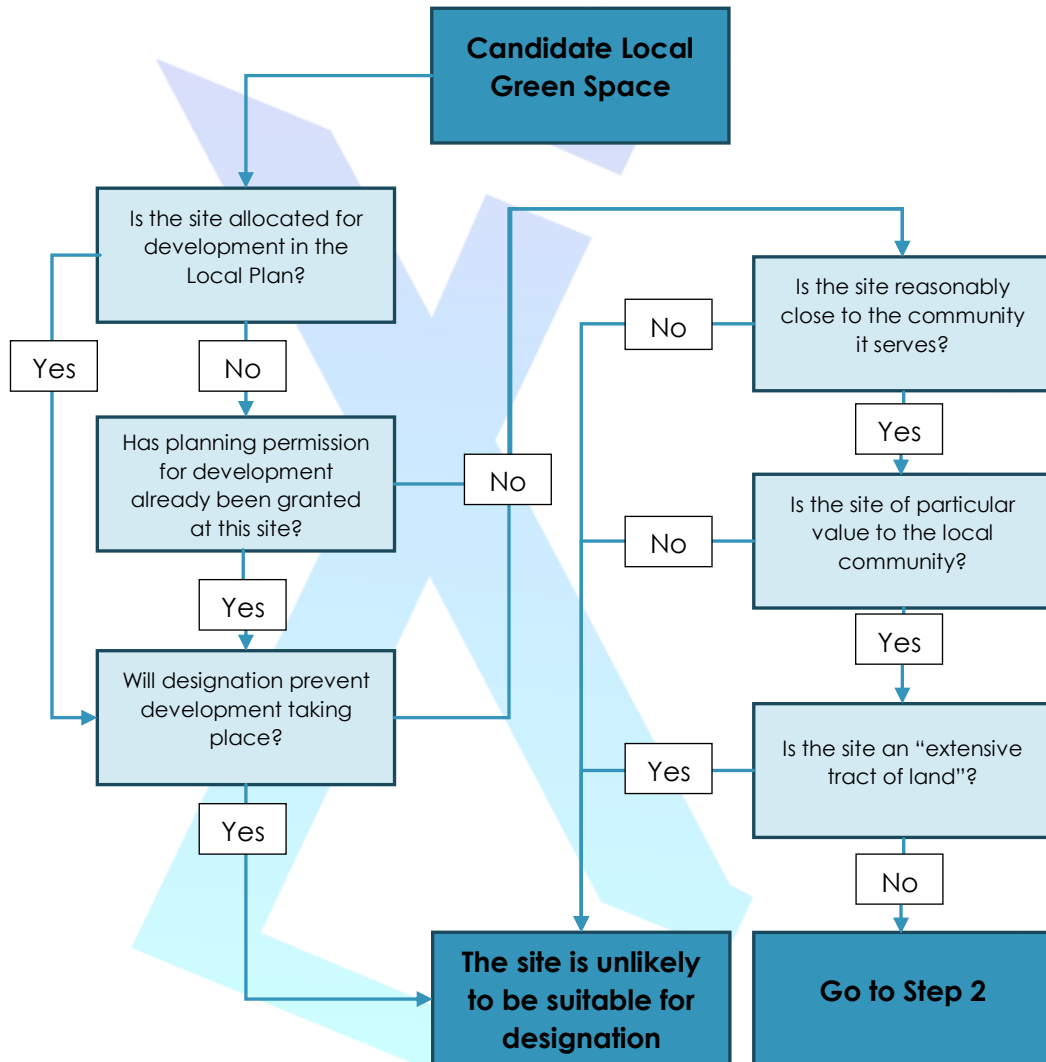
In order to ensure that any designation in the is robust, we have created a checklist against which potential Local Green Space sites should be tested.



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Step1: Quick check

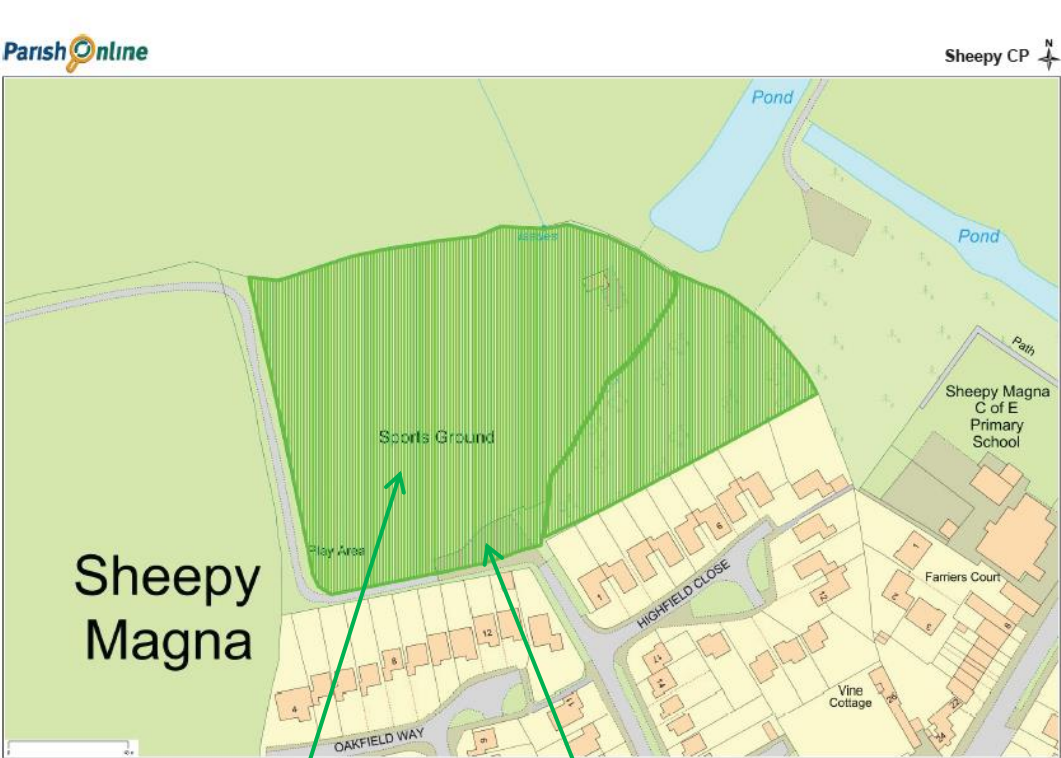
Using the "decision tree" below, check to see whether a candidate Local Green Space is likely to meet the designation criteria.

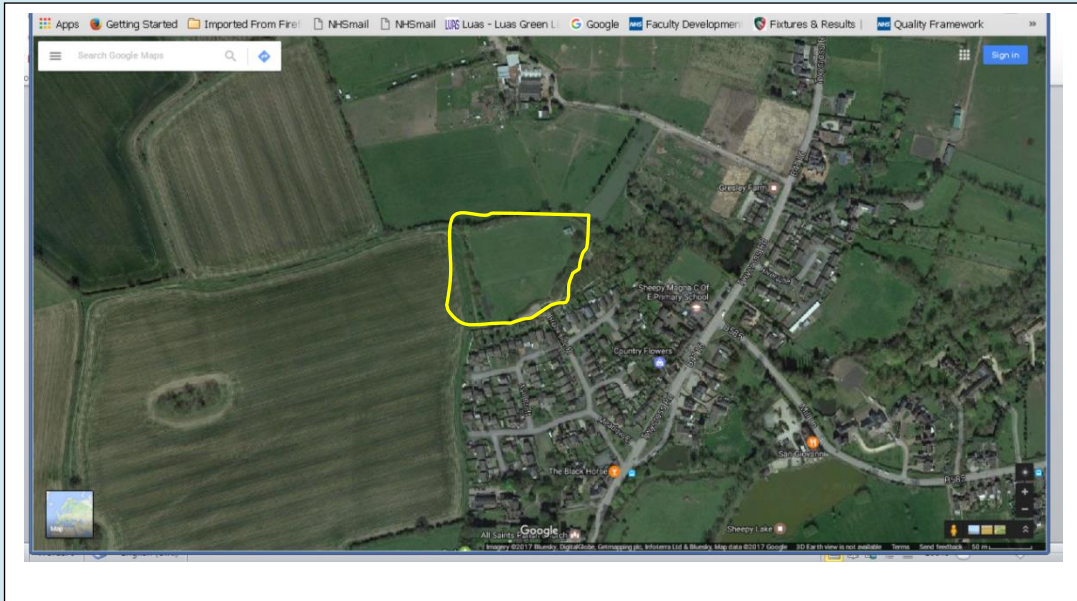


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Step 2: Complete checklist

If it seems that the candidate site may meet the designation criteria, complete the designation checklist below (and provide all the relevant evidence). The checklist should be completed for each candidate site.

1	General Information
1.1	Name and address of site <i>Some sites have several names and all known names should be given</i>
	Sheepy Playing Fields, Sheepy Magna. CV9 3RD
1.2	Site location plan <i>The plan can be at any scale, but must show the location and boundaries of the site. Please indicate the scale.</i>
	 <p data-bbox="341 1693 639 1727">Sheepy Playing Fields</p> <p data-bbox="876 1715 1190 1749">Playing Fields Car Park</p>



1.3	<p>Organisation or individual proposing site for designation <i>This will normally be a Town or Parish Council or a recognised community group</i></p>
	<p>Sheepy Parish Council</p>
1.4	<p>Ownership of site if known <i>Information on land ownership can be obtained from the Land Registry. Some land parcels are not registered however local people may know the owner.</i></p>
	<p>Sheepy Playingfields Association</p>
1.5	<p>Is the owner of the site aware of the potential designation?</p>
	<p>The owner will be informed during the Neighbourhood Plan Pre Submission Public Consultation period.</p>
1.6	<p>Does the owner support the designation? <i>Sites may be designated as Local Green Spaces, even if there are objections from the site owners</i></p>
	<p>No representation was received from the owner during the Neighbourhood Plan Pre Submission Public Consultation period.</p>

1.7	Photographs of site
	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">  <p data-bbox="288 663 756 763">Sheepy Playing Fields. Play Area. 7th June 2017</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">  <p data-bbox="852 663 1337 763">Sheepy Playing Fields. Looking North East. 7th June 2017</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">  <p data-bbox="288 1256 767 1384">Sheepy Playing Fields. Looking East with Sheepy Glade on the right. 7th June 2017</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">  <p data-bbox="852 1256 1358 1503">Sheepy Playing Fields. Looking South East showing Sheepy Glade to the left and the position of the Playing Field to the rear of the hedge in the centre of the picture. 7th June 2017</p> </div> </div>
1.8	<p>Community served by the potential Local Green Space <i>i.e. does the site serve the whole village/town or a particular geographic area or group of people?</i></p>
	<p>Serves Sheepy Parish, but principally Sheepy Magna & Sheepy Parva.</p>
2	<p>Planning History</p>
2.1	<p>Is there currently a planning application for this site? If planning permission has been permitted could part of the overall site still be used as a Green Open Space?</p>
	<p>No</p>
2.2	<p>Is the site allocated for development in the Local Plan? If allocated, could part of the overall site still be used as a Green Open Space?</p>

	No
3	Size, scale and “local nature” of proposed Local Green Space
3.1	Area of proposed site <i>It is unlikely that a site of over 20ha (50 acres) would be considered suitable for designation.</i>
	1.35 ha
3.2	Is the site an “extensive tract of land”? <i>(Extensive tracts of land cannot be designated as Local Green Space) e.g. how large is it in comparison to other fields; groups of fields; areas of land in the vicinity etc.? Does the site “feel” extensive or more local in scale?</i>
	No
3.3	Is the proposed site “local in character”? <i>e.g. does the site feel as though it is part of the local area? And why? How does it connect physically, visually and socially to the local area? What is your evidence?</i>
	The site is local in character. It adjoins residential properties & Sheepy Glade on one side and farmland on the remaining three sides. The site consists of a ‘Children’s Play Area’(with playground equipment), football pitch and brook. 95% (522) of responders to the ‘Sheepy Parish Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Questionnaire’ considered this Open Space to be important to the Parish with 37% of responders saying they visited it regularly.
4	Need for Local Green Space
4.1	Is there a need for a local green space in this location? <i>e.g. is there a shortage of accessible greenspace in the area? Is there a village needs survey or parish plan that provides evidence of that need. Further information – Natural England (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard)</i>
	Yes the Playing field provides a valuable recreation space for the Parish. (See 3.3 above)
5	Evidence to show that “the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”
5.1	How far is the site from the community it serves? Is the site within 2km of the local community? <i>Possible evidence – a map to show that distance</i>

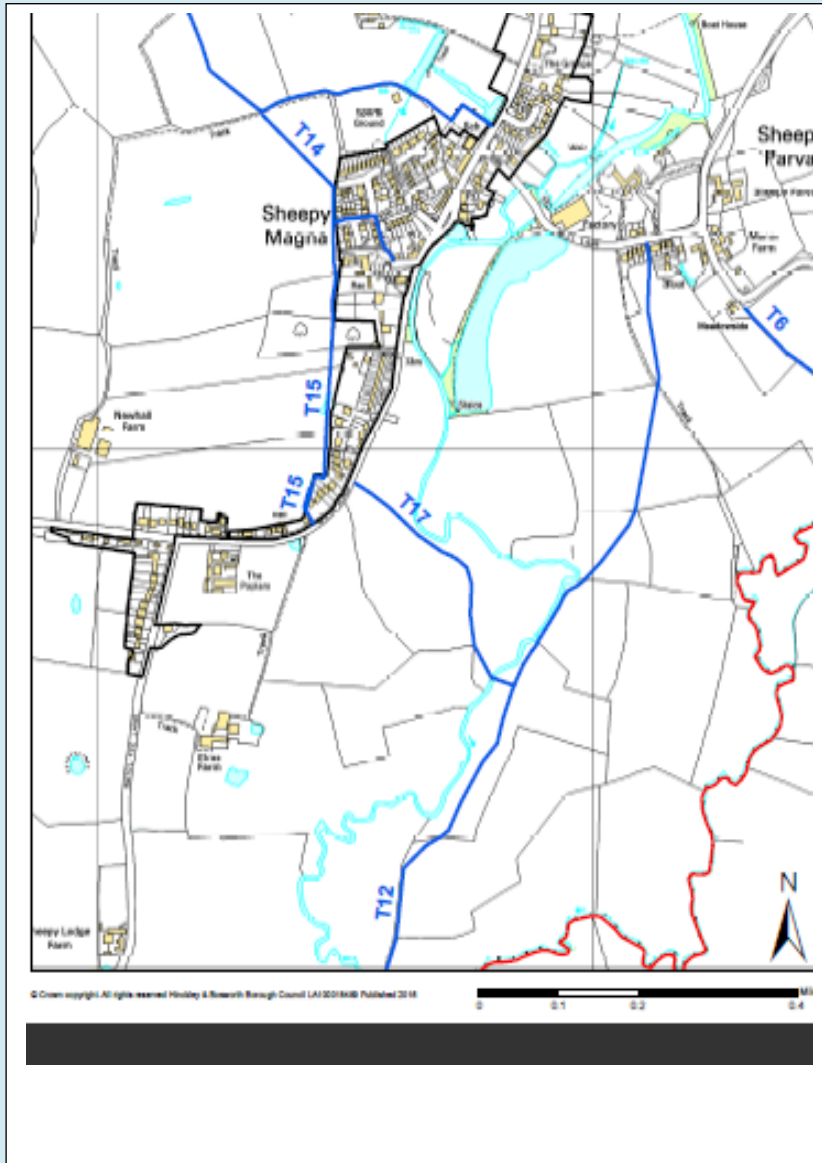
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The Playing Field adjoins Sheepy Magna. Sheepy Magna makes up 65% of the population of the Parish. (See Map section 5.2)

- 5.2 Are there any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes?
e.g. railway line; main road
Possible evidence – a map to show any potential barriers and how those can be overcome.

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The site lies to the North East of the central part of Sheepy Magna accessed from Brookside Place. The majority of residents of Sheepy Magna can access the site without crossing a main road. Furthermore, access can also be gained from public footpaths and field tracks.



6	Evidence to show that the green area is “demonstrably special to a local community”
6.1	Evidence of support from Parish or Town Council e.g. letter of support; Council minutes

	The Sheepy Parish Council have approved the submission of the Sheepy Parish Neighbourhood Plan that identifies the site as a local green space.					
6.2	Evidence of support from other local community groups or individuals. <i>e.g. letters of support; petitions; surveys etc.</i>					
	'Sheepy Parish Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Questionnaire' Q59 (5.3.1) How often do you use the following open spaces?					
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Sometimes	Never
	Sheepy Magna Playing Fields	105 (16.9%)	100 (16.1%)	24 (3.9%)	193 (31.0%)	200 (32.2%)
	Q60 (5.3.2) Do you consider the open spaces are important to the Parish					
		Yes	No	No Opinion		
	Sheepy Magna Playing Fields	522 (95.1%)	2 (0.4%)	25 (4.6%)		
6.3	Evidence of support from community leaders <i>e.g. letters of support from Ward Members; County Councillors; MP etc.</i>					
	Not aware of any					
6.4	Evidence of support from other groups <i>e.g. letters of support from organisations such as Campaign to Protect Rural England; local amenity societies; local schools etc.</i>					
	Not aware of any					
7	Evidence to show that the green area "holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty," (if applicable)					
7.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site?					
	Yes					
7.2	Describe why the community feels that the site has a particular local significance for its beauty.					
	'Sheepy Parish Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Questionnaire' Q64 (5.4.1) Which of these views do you feel are important to the Parish?					
		Yes	No	No opinion		
	Glade and Playing Fields	503 (82.5%)	7 (1.1%)	100 (16.4%)		
7.3	Site visibility <i>e.g. is it easy to see the site from a public place? Are there long-distance views of the site? Are there views of the site from any key locations?</i>					
	The site is visible from Sheepy Glade , footpath T14 (Field at the end of Meadow Close/Oakfield Way) and footpath T13 (Field/s) to the north of the Playing Fields. (See Map section 5.2)					

7.4	Is the site covered by any landscape or similar designations? <i>e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Conservation Area; Special Landscape Area</i> <i>Further information –Natural England</i>
	Not known
7.5	Is the site (or the type of site) specifically mentioned in any relevant landscape character assessments or similar documents? <i>Further information –Natural England</i>
	Not known
7.6	Does the site contribute to the setting of a historic building or other special feature?
	No
7.7	Is the site highlighted in literature or art? <i>e.g. is the site mentioned in a well-known poem or shown in a famous painting?</i>
	Not aware of any
8	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance for example because of its historic significance” (if applicable)
8.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site?
	No
8.2	Are there any historic buildings or remains on the site? <i>e.g. listed buildings; scheduled ancient monuments; registered parks and gardens; war memorials; other historic remains or structures.</i> <i>Further information –English Heritage; local history society</i>
	No
8.3	Are there any important historic landscape features on the site? <i>e.g. old hedgerows; ancient trees; historic ponds or historic garden features</i> <i>Further information –English Heritage; local history society</i>
	See section 11.3
8.4	Did the site play an important role in the historic development of the village or town? <i>e.g. the old site of the town railway station; the old garden for the manor house etc.</i>
	See section 9.4
8.5	Did any important historic events take place on the site?
	No
8.6	Do any historic rituals take place on the site? <i>e.g. well-dressing; maypole dancing etc.</i>
	No

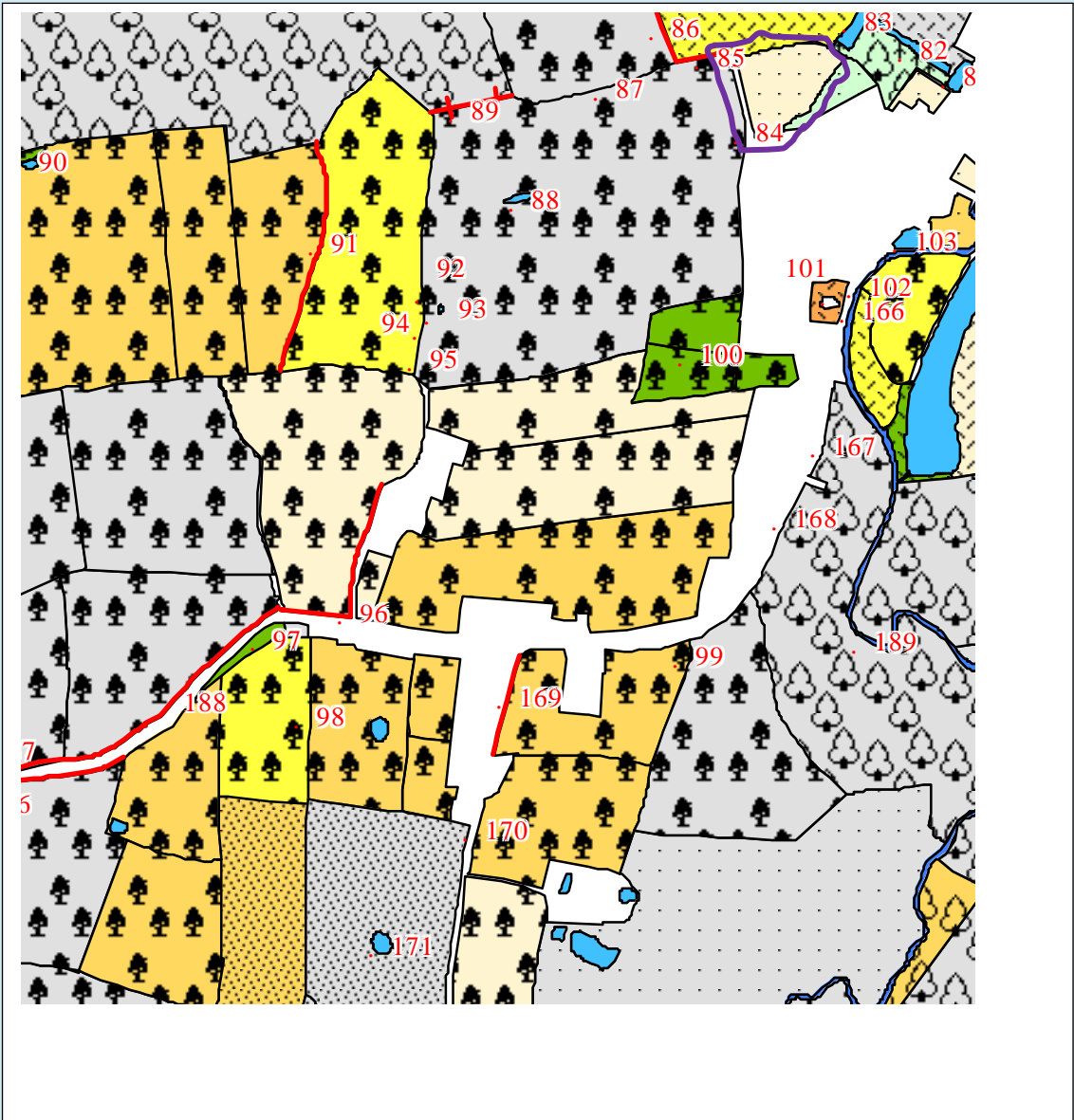
9	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its recreational value (including as a playing field)”, (if applicable)
9.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site?
	Yes
9.2	Is the site used for playing sport? <i>If so what sport? How long has it been used for sports provision? Is this sports provision free or is a club membership required?</i> <i>Further information – Sport England</i>
	Yes. The site contains a football pitch accessible to any members of the public. Furthermore, the pitch is used for regular matches and weekly training by ‘Sheepy Old Boys Football Team’. The site has also been used for Cricket matches.
9.3	Are the public able to physically access the site? <i>e.g. are there any public rights of way across the site? Or adjacent to the site? Has access been allowed on a discretionary basis? Is there public access to the whole site or only part? Is there good disabled access to the site? (A site can still be designated even if there is no public access.)</i>
	There is public access to the entire site. There is a small car park at the site, accessed from Brookside Place and an unclassified county road runs along two sides of the site. Also the site is further accessible from public footpaths and tracks. (See section 5.2)
9.4	Is the site used by the local community for informal recreation? And since when? <i>e.g. dog walking; sledging; ball games etc.</i>
	The site is used by the community for recreational activity ball games, dog walking, etc. There is also a “Children’s Play Area’(with playground equipment – See photograph section 1.7) . From information supplied by the Local History Society, it is believed that this site, Field No. 5762 was set aside for a playing field in Revised Sheepy Village plan of 1965 and in 1970 the landowners were prepared to sell the land on the basis of £500 per acre. This looks to be confirmed by the actual conveyance on 10/6/1971 between the landowner on the one part & the Parish Council on the other and then 25/9/1972 from the Parish Council to the Playing Field Trustees.
10	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its tranquillity” (if applicable)
10.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site?
	Yes.
10.2	Do you consider the site to be tranquil? <i>e.g. are there are any roads or busy areas close by?</i>
	The site offers peace and tranquillity as it is adjacent to agricultural land.
10.3	Is the site within a recognised tranquil area? <i>e.g. within the Campaign to Protect Rural England’s tranquillity maps</i>
	No

11	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of the richness of its wildlife”; (if applicable)
11.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ? Yes. The site has a boundary of trees/bushes on one side, Sheepy Glade (Woodland) on another and is traversed by a brook offering a natural habitat for wildlife.
11.2	Is the site formally designated for its wildlife value? <i>e.g. as a site of special scientific interest; a key wildlife site etc Further information - Natural England</i>
	See 11.3
11.3	Are any important habitats or species found on the site? <i>e.g. habitats and species listed in the UK priority habitats and species lists or in Biodiversity Action Plans or protected species or on the red/amber lists of birds of conservation concern.</i> <i>Further information - Natural England; National Biodiversity Network; RSPB</i>

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Sheepy Parish Habitat Survey carried out by Leicestershire County Council. Last surveyed 2011.

Map - Sheepy Parish, south-west



Surveyor	Date	PLWS/ cLWS2	Condition	Survey required	S.V.N	Current Status	Habitat description	Grid Reference	Parish /DNGer Note
KH	15/06/2011	cLWS	Good	Y	Y	None	Nice veteran Quercus standard in hedgerow with dead wood and cavities. Girth >4m.	SK3249001571	84 Sheepy
KH	15/06/2011	No	OK	N	S	None	Hedgerow with Crataegus monogyna, Acer campestre, Fraxinus excelsior, Prunus spinosa, Sambucus nigra, Rosa arvensis, Corylus avellana, Rosa canina. Not so varied in central section. Untopped.	SK324016	85 Sheepy

11.4 What other wildlife of interest has been found on the site?
Further information - Natural England; National Biodiversity Network

Not aware of any

11.5 Is the site part of a long term study of wildlife by members of the local community?
e.g. long-term monitoring of breeding birds.

www.naturespot.org.uk/parish/sheepy

NatureSpot is a Leicestershire educational charity that aims to help the public to learn about and identify local wildlife and encourage community participation in its web-based wildlife recording and mapping tool for Leicestershire.

12 Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for any other reason”; (if applicable)

12.1 Is this criteria relevant to this site?

Yes

12.2 What are the other reasons why the site has a particular local significance for the local community?

The site has been used for charity football matches, one of which involves a yearly match with a German Team. Furthermore, the Parent Teachers Association/Fireworks Committee organise a bonfire and Firework Display on or around 5th November annually.

Step 3: Neighbourhood Plan Group considers designation

The Neighbourhood Plan Group should review the evidence provided and decide whether the site is suitable for designation and whether any additional evidence is required.

Not every potential site will meet every criterion, however all sites must meet the following criteria in the checklist -

2.1	not with an extant planning permission within which the Local Green Space could not be accommodated
2.2	not allocated for development in the relevant Neighbourhood Plan, unless it can be shown that the Local Plan housing allocation is not strategic and can be re-located somewhere else in the neighbourhood plan area; or alternatively that the Local Green Space could be incorporated within the site as part of the allocated development
3.2	Not an "extensive tract of land"
3.3	"local in character"
5	in "proximity to the community it serves"
6	"demonstrably special to the local community"

And all sites must meet at least one of the following criteria in the Checklist -

7	"particular local significance ... because of its beauty"
8	"particular local significance ... because of its historic significance"
9	"particular local significance ... because of its recreational value"
10	"particular local significance ... because of its tranquillity"
11	"particular local significance ... because of its wildlife"
12	"particular local significance ... for any other reason"

In order to provide greater certainty, the checklist incorporates Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) to define the likely size of a suitable Local Green Space and its distance from the local community.

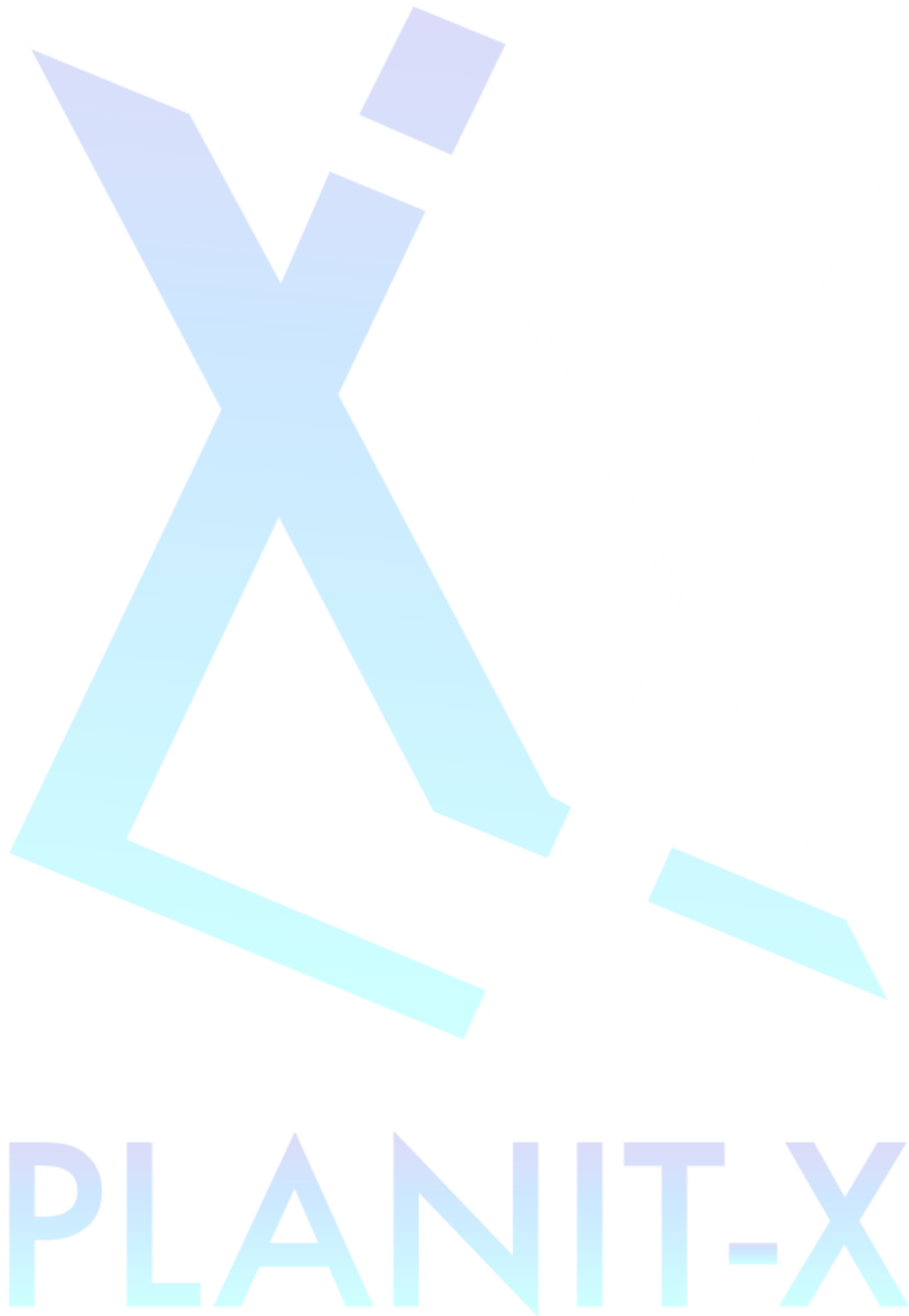
A site of over 20ha (50 acres) is considered to be "an extensive tract of land" and therefore not suitable for designation as a Local Green Space.

If during the process it becomes evident that the site is not appropriate for local green space designation, there are other options that can be investigated (see Appendix 2).

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Step 4: Consult landowner

The Neighbourhood Plan Group should consult the landowner.



Step 5: Neighbourhood Plan Designation

The site can now be designated in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site designation will be “tested” through the plan process. Anybody can object to policies or sites in a plan during the consultation process and these consultation responses must be considered.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be scrutinised by an Independent Examiner, who will ensure that the plan is robust and based on sound evidence. The completed checklist will form part of that evidence. The Neighbourhood Plan will also be subject to a local referendum.

Formal designation will be complete when the Neighbourhood Plan is ‘made’.



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APPENDIX 1: MODEL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY AND SUPPORTING TEXT

Draft Supporting Text

National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to those communities, where development will not be permitted except in very special circumstances. The following sites have been designated as Local Green Spaces through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process:

Draft Policy

Development that would harm the openness or special character of a Local Green Space (as designated on the Polices Map) or its significance and value to the local community will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.



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APPENDIX 2: ALTERNATIVES TO LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION

Agreements with land-owners

It may be possible for local communities to reach either formal or informal agreements with the owner of the site to ensure access to the site for local people. This may be an appropriate option where the site owner has a long-term connection with the local area, for example the owner of a large historic estate. It may be possible for the land-owner to dedicate the site as “open access land”.

Further information:

[Right of way and open access land - GOV.UK](#)

Community Purchase

In some instances local communities have purchased important sites to ensure that they remain in community control in perpetuity. The ownership can lie with the Town or Parish Council or with a specific trust.

Village Green status

Anyone can apply to register land as a green if it has been used by local people for lawful sports and pastimes ‘as of right’ (i.e. without permission, force or secrecy) for at least 20 years.

Further information:

[Town and village greens: how to register Open Spaces Society](#)

Local Nature Reserves

A Local Nature Reserve (LNR) provide people with special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. Local Nature Reserves are designated by district or county councils and the Local Authority must control the LNR through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner.

Further information:

[Natural England](#)

Assets of Community Value

The Community Right to Bid gives community groups a fairer chance to prepare and bid to buy community buildings and facilities that are important to them. This could include village shops, pubs or allotments. The right covers private as well as public assets. It is important to nominate land and buildings to be part of the register of ‘assets of community value’, which is held by the Local Authority. If something on this register is offered for sale, the community then have up to six months to prepare a bid.

Further information:

www.gov.uk/MyCommunityRights