

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.



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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.

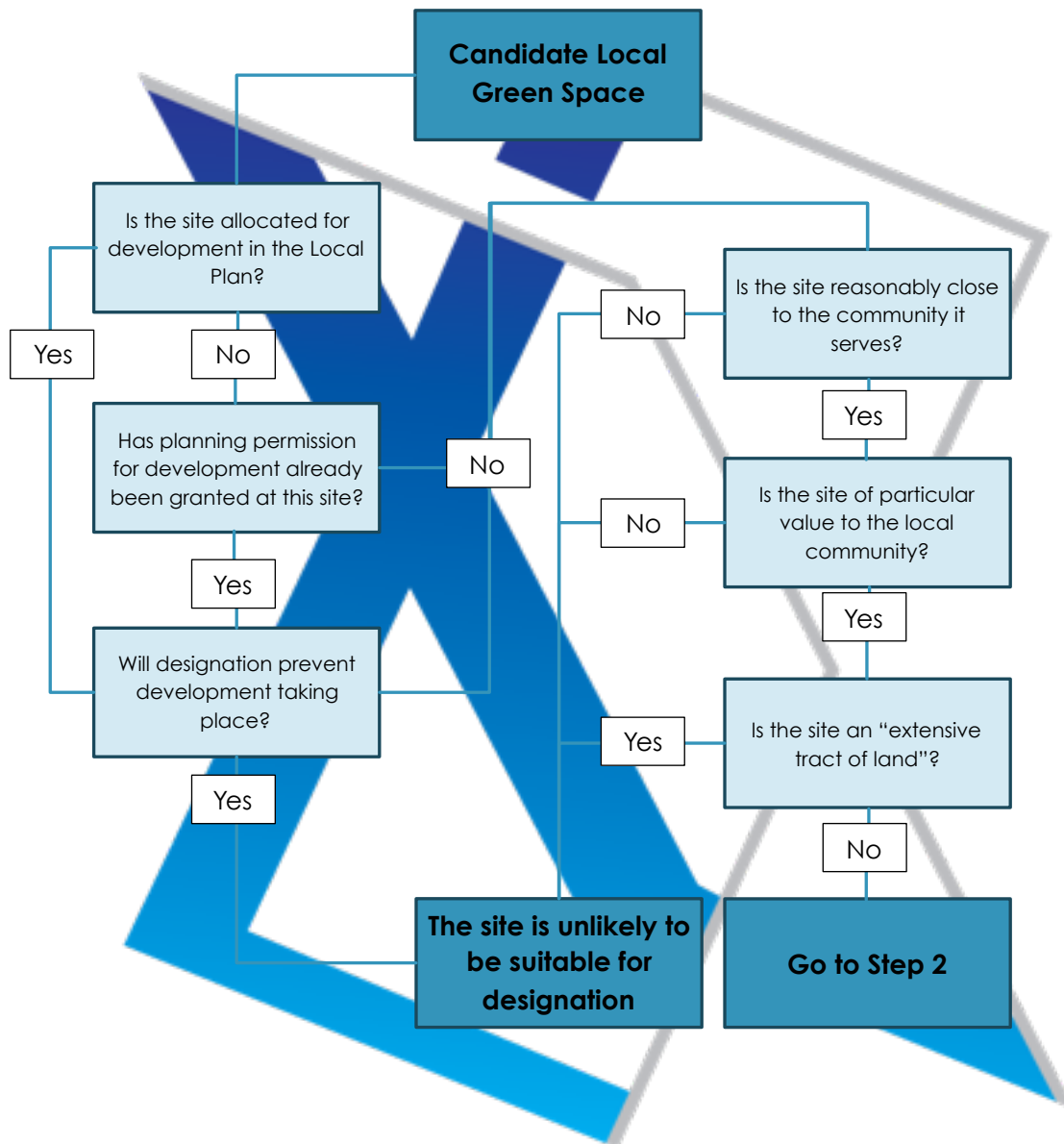
In order to ensure that any designation in the is robust, we have created a checklist against which potential Local Green Space sites should be tested.



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Step 1: 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>
	St Mary's Churchyard, Main St, Queniborough, Leicestershire, LE7 3DA
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>
	Insert here or attach separately
1.3	Organisation or individual proposing site for designation <i>This will normally be a Town or Parish Council or a recognised community group</i>
	Queniborough Neighbourhood Partnership Group
1.4	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>
	Diocese of Leicester
1.5	Is the owner of the site aware of the potential designation?
	YES
1.6	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>
	YES
1.7	Photographs of site
	Insert here or attach separately
1.8	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>
	Residents of Queniborough and an area of general architectural and historic interest
2	Planning History
2.1	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?

	NO
2.2	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?
	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> ????
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> The Medieval Parish Church, which is consecrated, is situated within the grounds and is a Grade 1 listed building of the Perpendicular Gothic Architecture type
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 located within the Queniborough Village Conservation Area and contains graves of local parishioners. The church yard also contains war graves of a Royal Field Artillery soldier and an airman of World War1.
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> The War Memorial is on the periphery of the site forming part of the boundary and is a unique area of remembrance, contemplation and reflection
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> The site is within the village boundaries
5.2	Are there any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes? <i>e.g. railway line; main road</i> <i>Possible evidence – a map to show any potential barriers and how those can be overcome</i>

	NO accessible to all
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 <i>e.g. letter of support; Council minutes</i>
6.2	Evidence of support from other local community groups or individuals. <i>e.g. letters of support; petitions; surveys etc</i> Evidence submitted in neighbourhood plan questionnaire responses shows that St Mary's Churchyard holds significant importance to 65% of respondents.
6.3	Evidence of support from community leaders <i>e.g. letters of support from Ward Members; County Councillors; MP etc.</i>
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> Strong and enduring links with the local primary school
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 The site dates back to the late 13th/early 14th centuries and houses the medieval church and local graveyard closed on 06/02/1979
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 a village focal point and the 162 ft church spire can be seen from various points around the village
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> The site is within the Queniborough conservation area
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> YES
7.6	Does the site contribute to the setting of a historic building or other special feature?

	Yes the Church and the War Memorial especially relevant during remembrance services and parades
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>
	The site features in all literature relevant to Queniborough
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?
	YES
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>
	The Church of St Mary is on the site and is a Grade 1 listed building
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>
	Not known
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>
	YES the church has been at the centre of community/family life for centuries and this continues including strong links with the local primary school
8.5	Did any important historic events take place on the site?
8.6	Do any historic rituals take place on the site? <i>e.g. well-dressing; maypole dancing etc.</i>
	The church continues to be a place of worship
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?
	NO
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>

9.3	<p>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></p>
9.4	<p>Is the site used by the local community for informal recreation? And since when? <i>e.g. dog walking; sledging; ball games etc.</i></p>
10	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its tranquillity” (if applicable)
10.1	<p>Is this criteria relevant to this site? YES</p>
10.2	<p>Do you consider the site to be tranquil? <i>e.g. are there any roads or busy areas close by?</i> The churchyard is set back from Main St and the essence of the site enhances reflection and peace. There are seating areas around the periphery of the site</p>
10.3	<p>Is the site within a recognised tranquil area? <i>e.g. within the Campaign to Protect Rural England’s tranquillity maps</i> YES because of its unique nature</p>
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	<p>Is this criteria relevant to this site? YES / NO</p>
11.2	<p>Is the site formally designated for its wildlife value? <i>e.g. as a site of special scientific interest; a key wildlife site etc</i> Further information - Natural England</p>
11.3	<p>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> Further information - Natural England; National Biodiversity Network; RSPB</p>
11.4	<p>What other wildlife of interest has been found on the site? Further information - Natural England; National Biodiversity Network</p>
11.5	<p>Is the site part of a long term study of wildlife by members of the local community? <i>e.g. long-term monitoring of breeding birds</i></p>

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 benefits for the mental health, well being and community cohesion for the residents of Queniborough



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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.



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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