

Local Green Space Call for Sites

Guidance Notes



Stafford Borough Council needs your help to identify important areas of Local Green Space across the Borough. These are areas that hold a particular importance to the community, and if designated in the Local Plan would be protected from inappropriate development.

Whilst areas of open space and land of environmental value have always been identified by the Council, designation as a Local Green Space is something different. Introduced by central Government in 2012 through the NPPF, the designation focusses on the importance of identified areas for the local community. Importantly national planning policy makes it clear that this designation should be consistent with wider planning policy for an area including the provision of new homes and employment opportunities, and it should not be seen as means to stop wider development needs.

Policy Background

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that the designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or areas of open space, and should only really be used in the following circumstances:

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community which 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.

When Local Green Space is designated the NPPF states that protection for such areas should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

Additional guidance on this designation is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

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Assessment

The following guidance may assist when completing the Response Form and will be used by the Council when assessing sites. This has been informed by the principles established in the NPPF and the additional guidance provided in the NPPG.

<p>Question 4 Site History</p>	<p>Does the site already have planning permission or has planning permission been granted previously for an incompatible alternative use or is it allocated for an incompatible alternative use in the adopted Local Plan?</p>	<p>The Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development or where it is allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan.</p> <p>The first stage in the assessment will be to assess the past planning history of each site submitted for designation.</p> <p>Sites with existing planning permission or an adopted allocation will not be considered appropriate, and no further assessment will be carried out. If a planning permission has lapsed for an alternative incompatible use this will also be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the approved development would be compatible with the Local Green Space designation, or where it is demonstrated that the planning permission or adopted allocation is no longer capable of being implemented. In such instances the Council would continue to assess the sites potential designation as a Local Green Space.</p>
<p>Question 6 Site characteristics</p>	<p>6 a) Is the site reasonably close to the community they serve?</p>	<p>The NPPF states that to be designated as a Local Green Space the area should be reasonably close to the community they serve.</p> <p>The proposed Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community it serves. Sites which are entirely</p>

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		<p>isolated from the community will not be considered appropriate.</p> <p>As a guide the Council propose to define 'reasonably close' as within 5 minutes to 10 minutes walking time.</p> <p>It is recognised that some discretion may be needed depending on the topography of the area, mobility and size of the community the green space serves, the size and function of the green space itself, why the area is seen as special, and the value placed upon it by the community.</p>
<p>Question 6 Site characteristics</p>	<p>6 b) Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for the identification of Local Green Spaces the Council would expect the size of the area to reasonably relate to the community that it serves.</p> <p>The NPPF is clear that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the land is not an extensive tract of land. The Council would expect areas to have clearly defined edges.</p> <p>Extensive tracts of land on the edge of settlements and blanket designation of open countryside will not be appropriate</p>
<p>Question 6 Site characteristics</p>	<p>Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to a local community?</p> <p>The proposed designation of spaces must be based on evidence to demonstrate why the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local</p>	<p><u>6d) Beauty:</u></p> <p>This relates to the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site, and its contribution to townscape, landscape, character and/or setting of the settlement.</p> <p>To be identified as a Local Green Space the Council would normally expect an area to</p>

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significance. To meet this requirement an area must fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

contribute significantly to the local identity and character of the area, playing an important role in defining the sense of place of an area and where relevant in defining the physical form and layout of the settlement.

e) Historic significance:

The site is viewed to be of local significance because of its historic importance to the local community. This could be because of the location of a historic asset within it, the areas role in providing the setting for heritage assets or other, locally valued landmarks, or because of the areas cultural associations and importance to local history. The area’s status as common land may be a further example of the historic value of a site to the local community.

f) Recreational value

The site holds a local significance for recreation providing an important asset for the community for a particular recreation activity or for a range of activities. This could be for formal or informal activity.

g) Tranquillity

The site submitted is viewed to be of importance to the local community because of the tranquillity it provides, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.

This is a subjective assessment and the Council will require clear justification as to why an area is of particular value in relation to this criteria.

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		<p><u>h) Richness of wildlife:</u></p> <p>The site is viewed to be of local significance because of the wildlife it is home to.</p> <p>It should be noted that in considering this criterion the Council will require justification as to why existing levels of protection e.g. local wildlife sites, Heritage Sites, SSSIs are insufficient and why the area warrants additional protection beyond that currently provided.</p> <hr/> <p><u>i) Other Reason:</u></p> <p>The proposed site has a particular local significance for the community for reasons other than those identified above.</p> <p>This could be for a range of reasons including for example the areas role in providing community cohesion and/or its status as an asset of community value.</p>
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In all instances the Council requires evidence as to why an area is of particular significance to the local community and why it warrants additional protection compared to other areas of open green space across the district. This could include for example photographic evidence, wildlife reviews or headcount data. The Council reserves the right to request additional evidence where needed.