

Proposed Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Enhanced Footpaths (EP)

Introduction

As part of the neighbourhood Plan process a Parish can designate areas of Local Green Space (LGS). A LGS is required to satisfy the following criteria:

- It must be “in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”
- It must be “demonstrably special to a local community”
- It must “hold a particular local significance” because of at least one of the following:
 - Beauty
 - Historic significance
 - Recreational value (including as a playing field)
 - Tranquillity
 - Richness of its wildlife
- It must be “local in character”
- It must not be an “extensive tract of land”

The NPWG has identified nine potential LGS sites within and around the village. Each site has been allocated an LGS number as shown on the LGS Plan. A number of these sites have also been considered as potential housing allocation sites. For ease of cross reference where sites or parts of sites have been considered for housing allocation the housing allocation site number (HA..) is also given in the descriptions below. All land owners have also been written to in order to determine whether they would be happy for the individual sites to be considered as a potential LGS. A summary of the responses received to date is included at the end of this report. The responses received have been taken into account in this assessment.

The NPWG has undertaken a review of these sites to assess the degree to which these potential sites meet the LGS criteria set out above. All of the sites are considered to meet the following criteria:

- It must be “in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”
- It must be “demonstrably special to a local community”
- It must be “local in character”
- It must not be an “extensive tract of land”

The sections below provide a description of each of the nine LGS candidate sites, together with a discussion as to the “local significance” of each site.

The concluding section provides a “traffic light” assessment of each site with reference to the above criteria and also takes account of the following:

- The preferences expressed by the local community at the last housing consultation
- The overall recommendations of the NPWG as regards the allocation of individual sites for housing
- Responses received from land owners

Individual Site Descriptions and Local Significance – Discussion

LGS1 (HA Site 9)

Site and Location

This is an area of two fields to the north of Shepherds Walk and an adjoining area of public open space to the west of Shepherds Walk. The fields to the north are part of a current planning application for residential development. The open space is an informal area adjacent to the Herring Stream. Local residents have put forward a written case for designation of the fields as local green space. There is a planning application pending for housing on this site.

Public Access

A public footpath crosses the area from west to east and the fields have been used by local residents as informal access for many years.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

There are views across the area from the public footpath and from the adjacent houses. The area has an unspoilt rural character. The winding channel of the Herring Stream forms the western boundary of the area. The fast flowing Herring is in a deep channel and is a focal point of the area. Mature trees along the stream channel, willows and alders, enhance the visual and landscape value of the stream.

Heritage significance

The mature trees and hedgerows which define the field boundaries in this area suggest this is an historic landscape.

Wildlife significance

The ancient hedges and mature oak trees are a potential habitat for a diverse range of species. The woodland on the railway embankment and the Herring Stream which form the boundaries to the area are also rich in wildlife. The wet meadows in the flood plain of the stream are a valued habitat.

Recreational value

The area is used by local people for informal recreation and is highly valued for its rural character and tranquillity. The public footpath is part of a longer distance route between Ditchling and Hurstpierpoint and is part of a circular route around the village.

LGS2 (HA Site2)

Site and Location

These fields lie to the west of London Road and are part of Ham Farm. The eastern field is part of a site that was recently refused permission for residential development at appeal. The area is highly valued by local residents and walkers.

Public Access

The fields are crossed by a public footpath and are used for informal access by local people.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

There are views across the area from the public footpath and from the adjacent houses on London Road. The area has an unspoilt rural pastoral character with mature trees and hedgerows. There is a key viewpoint from the edge of the Hurst Wickham ridge which affords views south across the area and beyond to the downs.

Heritage significance

The area has rich archaeological potential with evidence of prehistoric, Bronze Age and Roman remains. There is a possible Roman cemetery and a Romano-British Settlement at Ham Farm. The area has the central section of an archaeological notification area as the route of the Roman Road from Ham Farm to New Close Farm, Hassocks.

Wildlife significance

There is wildlife value in the mature hedgerows, grazing land, hedgerows and mature trees. Barn owls are often seen hunting the fields in this area.

Recreational value

The area is used by local people for informal recreation and is highly valued for its rural character and tranquillity. The public footpath links to a circular route which runs around the village.

LGS3 (HA Site 20)

Site and Location

This linear site links Grand Avenue with Woodsland Road and lies to the south of the new houses in the Clayton Mills estate. Part of the area south of Clayton Mills is a public open space and the other half was set aside for a health centre.

Public Access

The area is accessed by the public footpath which follows a stream running west to east. Part of the area is public open space associated with the Clayton Mills development and the rest is woodland separated from the footpath by the stream. This is an important footpath link between within the village linking Clayton Mills to Adastra Park.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The area is an important green infrastructure corridor in the centre of the village. The mature trees and streamside footpath are an attractive recreational link through the northern residential part of the village. There are limited views from the area as it is enclosed by trees.

Heritage significance

This corridor is part of an historic footpath link following the stream through the village from Ockley Lane via Adastra Park to Woodsland Road. This also links to the circular route around the village.

Wildlife significance

The stream and associated mature trees are a valuable wildlife corridor. The land set aside for the health centre has become overgrown and has wildlife potential.

Recreational value

This area is of high recreational value as a green corridor with associated footpath and open spaces.

LGS4 (HA Site 13)

Site and Location

This is an area of land which was part of landscape planning condition to be open space to serve the new development at Clayton Mills. This has never been fully implemented. The northern part of the area is a ploughed field bounded by a public footpath to the north.

Public Access

The site has open access and a public footpath crosses the area from south to north and joins the east west footpath on the northern boundary.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

There are views for the area to the open countryside to the north and equally there are views back across to this area from the ridge of Burgess Hill. The character of the area has been changed by the development of Clayton Mills and would benefit from being brought into positive management.

Heritage significance

An archaeological notification area covers the northern section of the area where possible Bronze Age and Roman remains have been found.

Wildlife significance

There is a spring rising in land north of Mackie Avenue creating a wetland and continuing across the footpath as a stream. The hedgerow on the northern boundary has wildlife value as do the mature Horse chestnut trees at Woodside Grange. There is mature mixed woodland along railway line which supports mature oak trees.

Recreational value

The area has the potential to provide informal recreation with enhanced management. The existing large bunds are a deterrent to less able users of the site. The well-used footpaths crossing the area are valued for views to the wider countryside and as part of the circular route around the village.

LGS5 (HA Site 8)

Site and Location

This site is two large agricultural fields which lie to the east of Ockley Lane. Both fields are in private ownership. The owner of the western field has put the site forward for potential residential and school development.

Public Access

The fields are crossed by a public footpath which is well used as the route from Hassocks to Ditchling. The western field was laid to pasture for many years and was very popular with dog walkers as a circular walk. There is now a crop in the field and the main access is a wide path across the footpath through the middle of the field which is heavily used. The eastern field remains under pasture and there is also an informal path around the perimeter of the field popular with local dog walkers.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are open views across the site from Ockley Lane towards Odland's windmill and the greensand ridge and Lodge Hill in Ditchling.

Heritage significance

The footpath corridor would have been an historic route between the villages. The distinct field boundaries and ancient trees would suggest this is a historic landscape and would have archaeological potential. The Roman road which ran west to east through the village is thought to have run just to the south of this area.

Wildlife significance

Mature ash and oak trees are a feature on the field boundaries along with one fine hornbeam and the associated hedgerows provide wildlife corridors and potential roosts and navigational corridors for bats. The eastern most field is bordered by streams and a mature hedge to the east and south. The southern boundary adjoins an SSSI.

Recreational value

The well-used footpath crossing the area is valued for views to the wider countryside and as part of the circular route around the village.

LGS6 (HA Site 5)

Site and Location

This field is part of the Downlands school estate which is not in regular use as a playing field but is used for long distance running events by the school. The school have allowed the Hassocks Amenity Association to use this field as the Community Field.

Public Access

The site has open access and is crossed by a public footpath.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are wide open views to the scarp slope of the downs from Ditchling Beacon to Wolstonbury Hill from this area.

Heritage significance

The heritage value of this area is largely unknown as there is a lack of investigative evidence. The field has never been ploughed and could therefore have archaeological potential.

Wildlife significance

The mature hedgerows on the north and south boundaries are of wildlife value. The western boundary a section of ancient woodland and a chalk stream which also have high wildlife value.

Recreational value

The area has high recreational value as a green field with open access and is used as a community field. The public footpath is part of the circular route around the village and is well used as it gives access to the downs and to Lag and Butchers Woods.

LGS7 (Not considered for Housing Allocation)

Site and Location

This is a strip of land to the west of the railway which links the village centre at Keymer Road to the public footpath at Misty Bridge.

Public Access

There is informal pedestrian access through this corridor.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The corridor runs through the built up area to emerge near the garden centre into a wooded corridor and an open field. There are views to the downs to the south.

Heritage significance

The railway corridor and Misty Bridge are of local heritage significance.

Wildlife significance

The woodland adjacent to the railway is designated as ancient woodland and the field to the south is unimproved meadow.

Recreational value

This corridor could provide a much needed cycle and footpath link from the west side of the village and station to the Downs. This has been a long term aspiration for the community.

LGS8 (Not considered for housing allocation)

Site and Location

This field sits between the woodlands of Butchers Wood and Lag Wood which are designated as semi- natural ancient woodland. The current owners also own Lag Wood and are managing the area for their own pleasure as a natural area and wildlife asset.

Public Access

The area is open access and the owners have expressed their wish that it remains as such but request that users respect and do not abuse the wildlife and natural beauty of the area.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are views across the area to the surrounding woodland and longer views to the downs. The area is tranquil as it is remote from the village roads and activity. The field has an unspoilt character as unimproved pasture surrounded by mature woodland.

Heritage significance

The heritage value of this area is largely unknown as there is a lack of investigative evidence. As an unspoilt and intact area of landscape with historic meadow and woodland it has high heritage value.

Wildlife significance

The unimproved meadow is a designated local wildlife site (SNCI) the value of which is further enhanced by proximity to ancient woodland (SNAW).

Recreational value

The area is highly valued by local people as an unspoilt, tranquil and accessible open space which is accessed by several public rights of way and from the Woodland Trust owned Butchers Wood.

LGS 9 (HA Site 4)

Site and Location

This area comprises a single ploughed field to the north of site LGS4. The field is bordered by post and wire fencing. A well-used footpath runs along the northern boundary linking to site LGS4.

Public Access

There is a public footpath running along the northern edge of the plot site, but there is no public access to the field which makes up the bulk of the plot area.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The field is bordered by fencing with a hedge to the north of the footpath. There are views from the area to the open countryside to the north and equally there are views back across to this area from the ridge of Burgess Hill.

Heritage significance

An archaeological notification area covers much of the site where possible Bronze Age and Roman remains have been found.

Wildlife significance

The site is primarily a ploughed field bordered by fencing. The hedge on the northern boundary will have wildlife value.

Recreational value

The area has the potential to provide informal recreation with enhanced management and improved access. The existing footpath provides a link to the land to the north of Clayton Mills (LGS4) and also links to the wider footpath network to the east of Ockley Lane. The well-used footpaths is valued by local dog walkers and for views to the wider countryside and as part of the circular route around the village.

Enhanced Footpaths

These footpaths have been identified as key recreational routes around the village. These are popular and well used routes and part of the potential circular route around the entire village. It is important that these are retained as green corridors with their associated views and rural character.

Some of these paths become muddy and impassable in winter and consideration should be given to using future developer funding to enhance and improve these routes where the growing population of the village is likely to increase pressure on them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

“Traffic Light” Assessment for each site

Traffic Light	LGS Assessment Criteria	Housing Referendum	NPWG Recommendations
	Meets assessment criteria	Site lies in group 11 to 15 in order of preference or not considered in referendum	Site not recommended for housing allocation
	Partially meets assessment criteria	Site in 6 to 10 in order of preference	Potential Housing allocation site
	Does not meet assessment criteria	Site in 1 to 5 in order of preference	Site recommended for housing allocation

LGS No, and Housing Allocation (HA) site No.	Proximity to community	Special to local community	Local Significance	Local in character	Housing referendum assessment	Overall NPWG housing allocation
LGS1 (HA 9)						
LGS2 (HA 2)						
LGS3 (HA 20)						
LGS4 (HA 13)						
LGS5 (HA 8)						
LGS6 (HA 5)						
LGS7 (N/A)						
LGS8 (N/A)						
LGS9 (HA 4)						

Comments

Three sites (LGS2, LGS5 and LGS8) meet all criteria for allocation as LGS and are not considered potential housing allocation sites.

Although LGS3 has limited current use at the present time and is therefore judged to only partially meet the ‘Special to the local community’ criteria, it is bordered by an important footpath link from

Clayton Mills to Adastra Park and has the added benefit of being the only candidate site within Hassocks (all others are located on the edge of the village).

Four of the LGS candidate sites (LGS1, LGS3, LGS4 and LGS9) are considered to have potential for allocation as housing sites by the NPWG.

Land owner Correspondence (responses received at 4th September 2015)

LGS 1

Letter from landowner opposing designation and stating that land is currently the subject of an application for housing.

LGS 2

Letter from Loxley Solicitors on behalf of land owner questioning whether LGS2 meets LGS criteria.

LGS 3 and LGS 4

Letter from Barratt Homes indicating that Site LGS 4 is already designated as open space by virtue of Section 106 agreement but also confirming that site should be considered available for housing allocation.

Letter also questions evidence base for designation of both LGS 3 and LGS 4.

LGS 5

Letter from Batchelor Monkhouse on behalf of landowners requesting proposal is dropped at this stage.

LGS6

Letter from owners of LGS6 stating that the site is currently used as school playing fields and seeking further clarification on the purpose of the designation.

LGS 7

Letter from Persimmon Homes questioning title for land.

LGS 8

Letter from land owners questioning the need for LSG designation as the land is protected by various planning and environmental designations.

LGS 9

Letter from Clifford Dann on behalf of land owner opposing allocation.