

**URBAN
VISION**

Enterprise CIC

Oakley Neighbourhood Plan
Local Green Space Assessment
February 2018

Introduction

This report assesses five sites in Oakley as potential Local Green Space designations. This augments other support work being done, providing support on drafting the policies of the neighbourhood plan and assessing sites for housing allocations.

Planning for green spaces and infrastructure can help to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits, ensuring that growth is sustainable. Green space and infrastructure can support social interaction, recreation, sports, walking, and cultural events. In addition, it provides habitats for wildlife and an attractive setting that is part of the character of the village and its historic environments. So green spaces have real economic value to the surrounding area, in addition to creating community well-being.

The report has been prepared in parallel to the site assessment report, in the interests of consistency.

The assessment takes place against the context of national policy and criteria for Local Green Space designations, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Methodology and Criteria

Methodology

The methodology for considering the sites is as follows:

- Site visits were undertaken by Dave Proudlove on 14th November 2017;
- A review was undertaken of previous representations on sites in Oakley;
- A template has been prepared for each site, applying the criteria for Local Green Space designations, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (see below);
- Community feedback has been appraised;
- Recommendations have been prepared on which sites to designate as LGS in the neighbourhood plan.

This report has been prepared in parallel to the site appraisal report. This ensures consistency between recommendations on potential housing site allocations and Local Green Space designations.

NPPF Criteria

The criteria in Paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been used to assess sites for Local Green Space designation.

National Planning Practice Guidance states:

“Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities”.

Paragraph 77 of the NPPF sets out the criteria that green space must meet in order to be designated as ‘Local Green Space’:

“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”.

In addition to these criteria, National Planning Practice Guidance states:

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“Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented”.

Other designations of land, such as green belt or conservation area status, do not necessarily preclude or support designation as Local Green Space. But it is necessary to consider whether the additional designation is necessary and would serve a useful purpose. Existing designations are discussed in more detail later in this guide.

Community Representations

Community engagement is an essential part of making Local Green Space designations, including in identifying community value. Feedback and comments from the local community were collated by the client as part of landscape characterisation work.

Comments received on the sites proposed for Local Green Space designations were as follows.

Proposed Green Space	Comments
Site 144: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Highfield Road area provides uninterrupted views over the North Bedfordshire villages
Site 147: Woodland on Westfield Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lovely, quiet walk into the countryside Development will detract from the character of the road and will impact on wildlife Wooded area includes old and substantial trees (which are protected), and is home to many species of flora, fauna, and fowl including bats, owls, and woodpeckers
Site 152: Oakley Academy Playing Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing field for sport and exercise; adjoining field for open space and dog walking; Should be protected as a school facility
Site 154: Grange Close/Station Road	None provided
Site 155: Land North of the River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas along and adjacent to the river are in important part of the village setting Views around the church and Oakley Bridges provide the most attractive way to enter the village

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Sites for Local Green Space Designation

Sites recommended for Local Green Space designation are:

- Site 144: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood;
- Site 147: Woodland on Westfield Road;
- Site 152: Oakley Academy Playing Field;
- Site 154: Grange Close/Station Road; and
- Site 155: Land North of the River.

All of these sites meet the criteria in the NPPF, as described in Annex 1.

The sites are identified on Plan 1 below.



Plan 1: Submitted and Proposed Local Green Spaces in Oakley

Recommendation 2: Consultation

Both designations and site allocations can be contentious as they can have significant implications for local amenity and the value of land.

As part of the wider community engagement, we would recommend that any proposed Local Green Space Designations be subject to consultation with stakeholders, landowners and the wider community, prior to the formal pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.

This may be done in parallel with engagement on proposed housing site allocations.

Annex 1: Site Assessment Forms

The following pages include a template for each site, applying the NPPF criteria.

Site 1: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood



Plan 2: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood, Milton Road

Site Details	
Location	Description and purpose
Site 144: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood, Milton Road	Area of community woodland to the east of the Parish.

Checklist		
Statutory Designations	Site allocations	Planning permissions
No statutory designations, but part of the site is a Local Nature Reserve, and a bridleway passes along the western boundary.	No site allocations	No planning permissions

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NPPF Criteria		
Close to the community it serves	Demonstrably special to the local community	Local in character and not an extensive tract
<p>The site is located around 1,000m from the village, considered to be within walking distance based on Natural England standards.</p>	<p>The local value of the woodland is demonstrated by the recent investment, web site and interpretation boards.</p> <p>The sites have recreational value and are used extensively for walking by local people. They are connected by several footpaths and bridleways.</p> <p>The woods are on a ridge, creating wide views to the surrounding area, but also making the woods themselves an important feature in the Bedford landscape.</p> <p>The woods include a range of tree types (oak, ash, field maple, beech, hornbeam) and species of wild flower. They also provide habitat to a range of birds, bats, butterflies and moths.</p> <p>From community engagement, 70% of local residents would support its designation as a Local Green Space.</p>	<p>Together the woods cover to just over 11ha. This is a fairly large area, though not necessarily an extensive tract of land.</p> <p>Browns Wood and Millennium Wood could be considered separately for designation as LGS, rather than grouping them together.</p>

Site 2: Woodland on Westfield Road



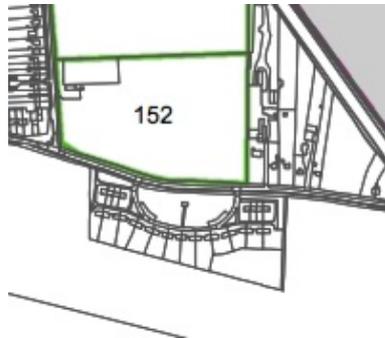
Plan 3: Woodland on Westfield Road

Site Details	
Location	Description and purpose
Site 147: Woodland on Westfield Road	Small coppice that follows Westfield Road and is adjacent to and opposite a number of residential dwellings.

Checklist		
Statutory Designations	Site allocations	Planning permissions
No statutory designations	No site allocations	No planning permissions

NPPF Criteria		
Close to the community it serves	Demonstrably special to the local community	Local in character and not an extensive tract
Located on the western edge of the village, within easy walking distance for most residents.	<p>High landscape value, contributes to the character and landscape setting of the western side of the village.</p> <p>Used by local people for walking and cycling. Accessible to older members of the local community.</p> <p>From community engagement, 64% of local residents would support its designation as a Local Green Space.</p>	The site is a small coppice, covering less than 1ha.

Site 3: Oakley Academy Playing Field



Plan 4: Oakley Academy Playing Field

Site Details	
Location	Description and purpose
Site 152: Oakley Academy Playing Field, Station Road	The playing field serves the academy, but is also used by the local community and clubs for a range of sports

Checklist		
Statutory Designations	Site allocations	Planning permissions
No statutory designations	No site allocations	No planning permissions

NPPF Criteria		
Close to the community it serves	Demonstrably special to the local community	Local in character and not an extensive tract
The playing field is located at the heart of the Parish, within easy walking distance of most residents.	<p>The site is used by Oakley Academy (local school) and local clubs, including the village football team, Oakley Rangers.</p> <p>By supporting sport and recreation, the playing field contributes to the health and well-being of the local community. Sports accommodated include football, hockey and other field sports.</p> <p>From community engagement, 67% of local residents would support its designation as a Local Green Space.</p>	<p>The scale of the site is large (4.6ha) but not extensive.</p> <p>It is clearly local in nature and serves the village.</p>

Site 4: Grange Close/Station Road



Plan 5: Grange Close/Station Road

Site Details	
Location	Description and purpose
Site 154: Grange Close/Station Road	Small village green type space that plays an extremely important role in the setting of an award-winning housing scheme

Checklist		
Statutory Designations	Site allocations	Planning permissions
No statutory designations	No site allocations	No planning permissions

NPPF Criteria		
Close to the community it serves	Demonstrably special to the local community	Local in character and not an extensive tract
The space is located at the heart of the Parish, within the village boundary.	<p>The site is green recreational space, forming a setting and landscape relief to the built area for Grange Close and Reynes Drive residential neighbourhoods.</p> <p>From community engagement, 70% of residents would support its designation as a Local Green Space.</p>	The space is small in nature (0.24ha).

Site 5: Land North of the River



Plan 6: Land North of the River

Site Details	
Location	Description and purpose
Site 155: Land North of the River	The proposed Local Green Space provides an important green link from the village to the River Great Ouse

Checklist		
Statutory Designations	Site allocations	Planning permissions
No statutory designations	No site allocations	No planning permissions

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NPPF Criteria		
Close to the community it serves	Demonstrably special to the local community	Local in character and not an extensive tract
<p>The space is located to the south of the village. A public right of way that runs through the site making it highly accessible and provides a link between the village and the Oakley Bridges, giving access to the river footpaths.</p>	<p>The space has been farmed land for centuries. It includes a footpath, linking the village to the River Great Ouse. The space is used frequently by walkers.</p> <p>The space provides extensive views towards the river and to the west to Stevington, including the historic windmill.</p> <p>A band around the northeast and south boundaries of the site is identified by the local planning authority as 'Village Open Space' (Village Open Spaces –Oakley). The comments given are: "Provides a view into the village from the open countryside".</p> <p>From community engagement, 83% of local residents would support its designation as a Local Green Space.</p>	<p>The space is large (8.3ha), but is not considered extensive.</p>

Contact



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