

Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Space

Purpose of Report

This report assesses the merit of various sites nominated for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan as 'Local Green Space', to be subject to policy EN03 in the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan.

Legislation

The NPPF gives town and parish councils the right to designate small local recreation and amenity areas that are of "*particular importance to the community*" as 'local green spaces' and give them protection in the Neighbourhood Plan. The NPPF (para. 77) states that the green space should be:

- *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *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*
- *is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

In addition to these criteria, National Planning Practice Guidance advises us that:

"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.

Candidate Sites

During 2016, members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group nominated sites within the settlement area of Cullompton that were considered to meet the criteria of the NPPF.

It was noted that the NPPF is quite stringent and specific in its criteria relating to local green space designation. It does state that "*designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space*" (para. 77). With this mind, sites whose primary purpose was organised sport or recreation were excluded from consideration for designation (although they were considered for alternative policy protection as important recreation areas). All other candidate sites were subject to an initial assessment to ensure they were local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

As regards being an **extensive tract** of land, the NPPG¹ advises that there is no hard and fast rule about the size of a local green space. It is a judgment call therefore. But the NPPG goes on to emphasise that an LGS designation should only be used where "*the green area is not an extensive tract of land*". There is a no set maximum nor minimum size, but the site needs to be 'local' in character.

In applying this criterion to potential local green space in Cullompton, we asked:

- does the space or combination of adjoining spaces 'feel' local in character and scale, in respect of the local community that the space serves?
- Is the proposed space larger than other areas of land in the vicinity?
- Is it contained with clearly defined edges?
- How does the space connect physically, visually and socially to the local area?

As for being in proximity to the community it serves, we were advised to apply the **reasonably close** test, which is another judgment call. If public access is a key factor influencing its consideration, the site should be within walking distance of the community it serves. This may vary depending on the size

¹ NPPG = National Planning Policy Guidance

of the community to which the green space relates, the size of the green space or the value placed on it by the community. The land must not be isolated from the community.

The third test that needed to be applied was whether the site is **demonstrably special** to the local community and holds a particular **local significance**. The examples given in the NPPF are: “*because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife*”. We looked for indications that the community cares about space and its future as a facility or amenity for the community to enjoy. This was tested initially during the informal community consultation on the first version of the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan during October-December 2016. At this time a draft ‘Local Green Space’ policy (EN03) was presented to the community, with four sites initially identified as having the potential to be designated. Fifteen additional sites were identified as worthy of protection as ‘Existing Recreation Areas’ under a draft neighbourhood plan policy (WL01). The consultation included an invitation to the community to nominate further candidate sites. There were few comments made about the draft local green space policy or the list of potential sites, even from the owners.

A subsequent review of the response and the policy approach, resulted in a realignment of several of the sites. The Steering Group decided that policy WL01 should focus on those larger recreation areas that provide the public or local schools with space for organised sports and recreation. The revised policy WL01 names six specific sites to be the subject of the policy:

- Cullompton Community College sports pitches, Meadow Lane
- Cullompton Cricket Club
- Culm Valley Sports Centre
- Linear Park, Millennium Way
- Upcott Field
- Willowbank School Field,
Knowle Lane

Those sites that were considered to meet the local green space criteria of the NPPF were listed in policy EN03. The level of community support for these sites however was uncertain. It was agreed that this should be tested by the next stage of community consultation. Owners of all the sites were written to (see Appendix)

The following list was agreed by the Steering Group for inclusion in the Regulation 14 Consultation Version of the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan, 2017.

Ref.	Site Name/Address	Description
A	Bilbie Close /Crow Bridge	<i>a stretch of grass that provides for a range of informal leisure activities. It is bordered on two sides by a local brook.</i>
B	Bockland Close	<i>a play area at the rear of dwellings that provides a safe play space for local children. It has a range of play equipment with safety surfaces</i>
C	Clover Drive	<i>a triangular piece of grass, fringed with mature trees that contains a small children’s play area, with a modern multi-play installation and a safety surface</i>
D	Crossparks	<i>a corner plot of amenity land at the edge of a new housing estate. It helps green the local environment and effect a transition between the urban area and the nearby countryside</i>
E	Crow Bridge (opp. Langlands Road)	<i>a corner plot of amenity land at the edge of a new housing estate. It helps green the local environment and effect a transition between the urban area and the nearby countryside</i>
F	Culm Lea Play Area	<i>at the end of cul-de-sac, alongside a footpath that leads to an informal walkway along the River Culm, is a fenced local children’s play area with some basic play equipment</i>
G	Forcefield Road	<i>an amenity space with mature trees that provides a car-free pedestrian route through the estate</i>
H	Hayman’s Close	<i>a modern railing-enclosed play area in the middle of this modern housing estate. It offers a range of play opportunities for young children. As well as a multi-play installation for the younger children, with safety surface, there is a</i>

		<i>flat piece of grass that allows for a range of informal activities</i>
J	Hayman's Green	<i>a modern railing-enclosed play area in the middle of this modern housing estate. It offers a range of play opportunities for young children. As well as a multi-play installation for the younger children, with safety surface, there is a kick-about area for the slightly older children of the locale</i>
K	Headweir Road	<i>a fenced grass area with a large specimen oak tree. it has a children's play area with modern but traditional play equipment i.e. swings, slide and see-saw, all on safety surfaces</i>
L	Jubilee Gardens, Willand Road	<i>an attractive gateway site that has been planted with ornamental shrubs and commemorative trees and features a flowerbed displaying the town's name</i>
M	Knightswood Play Park	<i>a small park off Knightswood that provides a safe and sheltered play area away from the roads. It offers several pieces of play equipment and space to run around</i>
N	Meadow Lane	<i>an expanse of amenity grass that plays host to the town's skate-park</i>
O	River Mead Play Area	<i>a small triangular grassed area with three pieces of junior play equipment, with safety surfaces, and a bench serving the families of the local area</i>
P	Saxon Way/ Windsor Close	<i>at the junction of these two roads is an amenity area containing a fenced, modern, play area for young children serving the families of the local area</i>
Q	Swallow Way	<i>a green corridor crosses Swallow Way providing a well wooded pedestrian routeway across the estate leading westward into the countryside. At the eastern end with a footpath entrance off Manning Avenue is a fenced children's play area with a range of play equipment</i>
R	Tufty Park	<i>a small, gated, play area on Shortlands Road with grass and a range of play equipment for young children, with safety surfaces</i>

Consultation October-November 2017

The community consultation, that took place under Regulation 14, included a permanent exhibition at the Library (for the duration of the consultation period). Parishioners were made aware, by newsletter (the Crier) newspaper articles and the website, that the Neighbourhood Plan was out for its pre-submission consultation and their views were important.

Despite encouragement we received very few comments from the public relating to the proposed designation sites. Just three community respondents commented specifically on policy EN03. Two respondents advocated the inclusion of land adjacent 75 Headweir Road because *"retaining green space at the lower end of Headweir Road....if this is taken away, kids play on it, it is good for people's wellbeing having the open space and was left as such in the original development plans"*.

The other nomination was the area of the Roman forts on St Andrews Hill, a scheduled ancient monument. This came from an individual parishioner, Devon County Council and Historic England. The latter said the site: *"is an important open green space in terms of its historic significance, particularly with the north/north-west town expansion. Consideration should be given to better access and interpretation. Suggest this space be added to the list of local green spaces"*.

Both Natural England and Historic England are supportive of a policy that protects the town's green infrastructure. Mid Devon DC however questioned whether the policy is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework or the Local Plan Review because of *the significant number of sites*. It pointed out that several of the sites *"related to play areas"* and the evidence needed to be clearer as to why some of the sites were *"demonstrably special to the local community"*. Based on the NPPF's assertion that *"the Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space"*, Mid Devon DC have suggested that *"an amendment is suggested to relate the list of areas identified for consideration under Policy DM24 as opposed to Local Green Space policy"*.

For information policy DM24 of the Local Plan Review provides an in-principle protection of *"open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields"* from alternative development unless they are no longer needed by the community or replaced with better. It also states that *"designated areas of Local Green Space will be protected from development unless the development meets the criteria set out in national policy for the protection of Green Belts"*.

In the light of the comments received it was decided to retain policy EN03 in the Neighbourhood Plan, but to undertake a review of the proposed sites to identify the extent to which they meet the NPPF criteria to be more confident that it is appropriate to designate them as Local Green Space to be named and protected by policy EN03.

Appraisal and Conclusions

The table below has been produced to summarise the analysis carried out to establish whether the sites meet the criteria of the NPPF.

Cullompton Local Green Space Analysis 2017 Sites:	Is it an extensive tract of land?	In proximity to the community it serves?	Is it sufficiently green?	Is it demonstrably special to the community because of:						Should it be designated as local green space?
				beauty?	historical significance?	recreational value?	richness of wildlife?	tranquillity?	Other?	
A. Bilbie Close/Crow Bridge	No	Yes	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	
B. Bockland Close	No	Yes	X		X	✓	X	X	X	
C. Clover Drive	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	
D. Crossparks	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	
E. Crow Bridge (opp. Langlands Road)	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	
F. Culm Lea Play Area	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	
G. Forcefield Road	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓ 1	
H. Hayman's Close	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
J. Hayman's Green	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
K. Headweir Road	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
L. Jubilee Gardens, Willand Road	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	
M. Knightswood Play Park	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	✓	X	
N. Meadow Lane	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
O. River Mead Play Area	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
P. Saxon Way/Windsor Close	No	Yes	✓		X	✓	X	X	X	
Q. Swallow Way	No	Yes	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	
R. Tufty Park	No	Yes	X		✓	✓	X	X	X	
Headweir Road (adj. 75)	No	Yes	✓		X	X	X	X	X	
St Andrews Hill	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ 2	

✓ 1 = Provides a route through to other places

✓ 2 = Could be used as a link through to development

As part of the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan, we are seeking to introduce a policy to safeguard certain 'local green spaces' within the parish of Cullompton from development.

We are writing to inform you that some of the green spaces owned or managed by Mid Devon District Council have been identified as green spaces worthy of protection. I am aware that Tufty Park and Headweir Road are now being leased by Cullompton Town Council.

The policy we have in mind is as follows:

Policy EN02 Local Green Space

The following areas (listed below and identified on attached map) are designated as 'Local Green Spaces' and protected from development under Local Plan policy DM24. Development proposals on designated Local Green Spaces will be supported only where such development demonstrably enhances the recreational use or amenity value of the green space.

- A Bilbie Close/Crow Bridge
- B Bockland Close
- C Clover Drive
- D Crossparks
- E Crow Bridge (opposite Langlands Road)
- F Culm Lea Play Area
- G Forcefield Road
- H Hayman's Close
- J Hayman's Green
- K Headweir Road
- L Jubilee Gardens, Willand Road
- M Knightswood Play Park
- N Meadow Lane
- O River Mead Play Area
- P Saxon Way/Windsor Close
- Q Swallow Way
- R Tufty Park

If you support this proposal or have any other comments to make about this proposal, please can you let me know, in writing, by 30th May 2017. I would be grateful if you would in any case acknowledge safe receipt of this letter.

Kind regards

Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Administrator

Cullompton Town Council