

Ashby De La Zouch Neighbourhood Plan– Important Local Green Spaces Site Selection Criteria

1. Introduction and Policy Context

Ashby De La Zouch Town Council is leading on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan through a Steering Group established for the purpose. One of the emerging priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan is to protect and enhance important local green spaces.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced a new concept of a Local Green Space designation. This is a discretionary designation to be made by inclusion within a Local Development Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.

The NPPF states

“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.

- 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”.

2. Ashby De La Zouch Site Selection Criteria

The NPPF requires that any Local Green Space designation must meet the specified criteria. The criteria contained in the NPPF tends to be general rather than specific – for example it states that it needs to be reasonably close to the community it serves but does not give set distances or areas. It is intended to act as guidance which should then be interpreted at a local level. To assist in the designation process a number of agencies have developed checklists that are consistent with and help develop the NPPF criteria, and against which potential local green space designations could be tested. The one below is drawn from the criteria developed by the Open Spaces Society and is specifically designed to assist in the Neighbourhood Plan process.

A scoring system, based on a Traffic Based RAG scores (i.e. Red, Amber, Green) has been adopted. This reflects good and common practice especially as it is easier to understand and use.

- Red was scored for a negative assessment where significant mitigation was required or there are more serious issues ;
- Amber was scored where mitigation might be required;
- Green was scored for a positive assessment.

Evidence for the RAG scoring was obtained from a range of sources, including emerging findings from community consultation undertaken as part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Site	Ashby Bath Grounds
Location of Site	Ashby Cultural Area – centre of Ashby
Description of Site	Ashby de la Zouch's historic Bath Grounds, a much loved, public recreation ground and park in the ancient market town of Ashby. To the East, the Grounds are bounded by the former course of the now culverted Gilwiskaw Brook which provided fresh water to the ancient settlement of Ashby and the Castle, ruined in the Civil War. The Castle's fish ponds, an important medieval food source, were also located here, extending into adjoining, derelict land. They are clearly shown in a 1735 map of "The Lands in the Manor of Packington" and their extent remains discernible in the local topography. Archaeological advisors suggest this area could yield valuable information about medieval Ashby and earlier settlements.

Criteria 1: Public Access (Some areas may already be available for public access, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access)

Red	Amber	Green
		<p>The Bath Grounds are available for public access for recreational and sporting activities throughout the year. They are owned by the proprietors of the Royal Hotel, but have been maintained and operated as a public park for over 50 years by Ashby Town Council. The Council's current lease includes a right to renew for a further 28 years.</p>

Criteria 2: Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves (there is no definition of this in the NPPF and it will be up to individual planning authorities to define. This may vary depending on the size 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 and would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served. Some local planning authorities have introduced a maximum distance between the space and the community. For instance, Leicester has stated it must be within 400 metres)

Red	Amber	Green
Justification	Justification	<p>The Bath Grounds cover 6.2 hectares within the Town Centre conservation area. They are close to the Town Centre and provide a scenic route into the town from several nearby housing estates and local sheltered housing. Covering 6.2 hectares within the Town Centre conservation area.</p>

Criteria 3: Demonstrably special to a local community - Evidence must be provided of the land's value to and use by the local community to show the land holds a particular local significance. The land must fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

Criteria 3a: Beauty (This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to landscape, character and or setting of the settlement. Local green spaces would need to contribute to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place, and make an important contribution to the physical form and layout of the settlement. It may link up with other open spaces and allow views through or beyond the settlement which are valued locally)

Red	Amber	Green
Justification	Justification	The Bath Grounds are an area of outstanding beauty and provides marvellous open vistas from the Royal Hotel in the west to the medieval Ashby Castle in the east.

Criteria 3b: Historic significance (The land should provide a setting for, or allow views of, heritage assets or other locally-valued landmarks. It may be necessary to research historic records from the County Archaeologist or National or Local Records Office)

Red	Amber	Green
Justification	Justification	The Bath Grounds derive their name from the Ivanhoe Baths, an impressive neo-Grecian Spa designed by Robert Chaplin and built by the 1st Marquis of Hastings in 1822 at the western end of the park. The Ivanhoe Spa itself was named after the locally-set Sir Walter Scott novel of 1820. The raised single storey building boasted a 150 foot colonnaded front with an architrave supported by 32 fluted Doric columns. The mineral water for the Spa was

		<p>transported to Ashby by boat and horse-drawn tramway from a saline spring at Moira colliery, 4 miles away. At this time, the Bath Grounds were laid out as an area of fashionable 'greensward' for the benefit of visitors to the Baths and included a carriage drive and walks used for "sedate and genteel recreation". Ashby prospered with the coming of the Spa. A theatre was built in 1828, a race course in 1835 and the railway arrived in 1849 forming the current southern boundary of the Bath Grounds. In 1888 the Baths were refurbished and the Bath Grounds "transformed" into superior "Pleasure Gardens" with well laid out walks, paths, drives and seating. The impressive Georgian Royal Hotel was erected beside the new Spa building in 1827 to accommodate rapidly increasing visitor numbers. Today it is the focus of a cluster of elegant Grade II* listed buildings dating from that period including Rawdon Terrace, the former Midland Railway Station and the Loudoun Monument that surround the Bath Grounds. The Ivanhoe Baths was demolished almost 80 years ago in 1962. They are still owned by the proprietors of the Royal Hotel, but have been maintained and operated as a public park for over 50 years by Ashby Town Council. The Council's current lease includes a right to renew for a further 28 years.</p>
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Criteria 3c: Recreational value (It must have local significance for recreation, perhaps through the variety of activities it supports, and be of value to the community)

Red	Amber	Green
Justification	Justification	<p>Today the Bath Grounds remain an important venue for both the Ashby Bowls Club and the Hastings Cricket Club as well as ad hoc community sport. It is a key area for daily recreation use for all ages including dog walkers, play area for family ball sports and family picnics.</p> <p>It is used as a main pedestrian thoroughfare to the main street and shopping area of Ashby.</p> <p>Throughout the year it is used for festivities including the annual "Fake Festival", Circus, spring and Summer Fayre, Jim's Tractor Run, The Food Fayre and many other community events.</p> <p>The construction of a new Heritage Trail is now underway for 2015/2016 which was awarded funded by the District Council and the Heritage Lottery Funding.</p> <p>The Bath Grounds has been an established recreational area for many years. By the turn of the century more formal recreational use was reflected in the establishment of tennis courts, a croquet lawn, a bowling green and use by the Ivanhoe Archery club and Deer's Leap Gun Club. By 1926 the Grounds had become an established venue for hockey and cricket clubs, hosting County Cricket until 1964. In tandem with formal development for sports, the Grounds became a focus for community activities, hosting grand bazaars with huge marquees, Whit Monday Gala Fêtes and the annual Flower and Agricultural</p>

		Show. A fete held in June 1905 attracted some 7000 visitors. The famous parachutist Dolly Shepherd, was a regular performer at these events. She made her first solo parachute descent from a balloon at the Bath Grounds.
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Criteria 3d: Tranquillity (An oasis of calm and a space for quiet reflection)

Red	Amber	Green
		The Bath Grounds provide Ashby's unique "countryside-within-the town" character. Providing the community with a beautiful green space to relax and play. It is an extensive green space that residents use picnics at the weekends in Summer, school children use for lunchtime and local workers relax it at break times. There are extensive trees which provide a spectacular enclosed space for relaxation

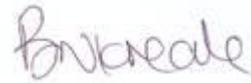
Criteria 3e: Richness of wildlife (This might include the value of its habitat, and priority areas may have been identified by the council. It may require some objective evidence, such as a designation, like a wildlife site or Local Nature Reserve)

Red	Amber	Green
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		There is a mixture of trees and flowerbeds providing a natural environment for insects, birds and animals. In addition there are wild areas which provide an environment for frogs and a small wet area for frogspawn.
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Criteria 4: Local in character, not an extensive tract of land (The criteria may differ between settlements depending on their physical size and population. The areas would normally be fairly self-contained with clearly-defined edges. Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. There is a no minimum size limit for local green spaces)

Red	Amber	Green
Justification	Justification	The Bath Grounds is a clearly defined area and provides Ashby with its unique local character. The Bath is clearly defined with one of its boundaries being a classic Georgian terrace providing a rich history which is vital for the economy of the town. It attracts many visitors in search of the charm of Ashby local history and pleasant environment.

Date	Name of Assessor (s)	Signature of Assessor (s)
10-11-15	Barbara Kneale	

PLEASE REMEMBER IF UNDERTAKING A SITE ASSESMENT TO DO THIS IN A LOCATION THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC AND IS SAFE INCLUDING BEING AWAY FROM THE ROAD AND OTHER POTENTIAL HAZARDS. DO NOT TRESPASS.





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