

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	Bullen's Field
Location of Site	Located to the western side of Prior Park Road in Ashby de la Zouch as shown on the attached map. See Appendix 1 : Bullen's Field Map.
Description of Site	Bullen's Field is an area of approx a third of a hectare located to the western side of Prior Park Road in Ashby de la Zouch between the Bath Grounds and the field owned by Leicestershire County Council (Castle Field). It is adjacent to the Ashby de la Zouch conservation area. The area is not currently well maintained and does not have general access for the public, but its importance as a Local Green Space largely derives from the views towards the Castle the site facilities.

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 site does not currently have general access to the public, although with permission access could be facilitated relatively easily and at low cost. The nature and size of the site does not make public access an essential factor to the overall value of this site to the community. It is the views and enhancement of the character of the overall area that makes it so important as a local open space. There is an opening onto the side of the bath grounds already in place.</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
		<p>The site is within the central area of the town within walking distance for the majority of the Town's population. It is adjacent to the Ashby de la Zouch conservation area. The site enhances the view for tourists visiting the castle. It is accessible by both road and footpath.</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
		<p>The site is essential to maintaining the views of the Castle from the Bath Grounds as well as the quality of the views from the Castle. It lies between the Memorial and Castle fields adjacent to the Castle and the Bath Grounds. Without this site being retained as open space, the views and character of the area would be severely reduced.</p>

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
		<p>The site allows views of the Castle, a grade 1 historic asset, that have been recognised by English Heritage as being important to the overall setting of the Castle. The site itself includes moats and fishponds to the Castle which are of significant archaeological interest. As demonstrated on the 1735 Map of "The Lands in the Manor of Packington"</p>

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
		<p>Whilst not currently used directly for recreational purposes, the site has in the past been used as a sports field by a local school. The recreational value of the site derives from the enhanced informal recreation in open spaces adjacent to the site. If not retained as open space, the value the community gains from recreation in adjoining areas would be severely diminished.</p>

Criteria 3d: Tranquillity (An oasis of calm and a space for quiet reflection)

Red	Amber	Green
		<p>The site enhances the “countryside within the town” character of the whole area and helps to maintain the atmosphere and environment that is so appreciated by the community. It forms the boundary of the Bath Grounds and as such naturally flows into one space .</p>

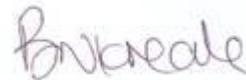
Criteria 3e: Richness of wildlife (This might include the value of its habitat, and priority areas may have been identified by the council. It may require some objective evidence, such as a designation, like a wildlife site or Local Nature Reserve)

Red	Amber	Green

		The site is not currently maintained and provides a more “wild” habitat close to the centre of Town that is not available elsewhere. This is a haven for insect life such as bees and birdlife .
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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
		The site is very local in character, being only a third of a hectare. However, it is an essential ingredient to the overall character of a much wider area.

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.

Appendix 1

Bullen's Field

