



The purpose of this guide note is to help Neighbourhood Planning Groups to assess the quality of the green spaces they have in their area and how best to protect and enhance those sites both individually and as network of assets.

Value of Green Spaces

The protection and enhancement of local green spaces is often a major driving force for communities in wanting to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. This is not surprising as green spaces provide many benefits to communities, including:

- Recreational value – both informal (e.g. dog walking) and formal (e.g. organised sports)
- Wildlife habitats
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation, e.g. sustainable drainage features (SuDs)
- Aesthetic value, local character and distinctiveness
- Supporting healthy lifestyles (e.g. opportunities for physical activity outdoors) and mental wellbeing (e.g. providing access to nature)
- Community cohesion
- Food growing

Valued green/open spaces may include:

- Parks and gardens
- Playing fields and sports pitches/grounds
- Rivers and canals
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes
- Village Greens
- Informal green spaces
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Allotments and community gardens

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is a term used to describe networks of green spaces (including natural and semi-natural green spaces as well as bodies of water and waterways). It delivers a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. It can improve water management, air quality and public health and wellbeing. It provides opportunities to protect and increase biodiversity, improve food and energy security, facilitate community development, and build resilience to the effects of climate change.

Through your Neighbourhood Plan actions and policies there are numerous opportunities to protect and enhance your green spaces. These opportunities will be greater if you think about them as 'green infrastructure' ensuring that where possible they can be seen and managed as a network of spaces rather than isolated pockets of green.



Local Green Space Designation

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives communities the right to designate areas that are of particular importance to them as Local Green Spaces and give them protection through their Neighbourhood Plan. Once designated, this means that development would be highly unlikely to be permitted on that site.

The criteria for designating an area as a Local Green Space are that it is:

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

The NPPF does not define what qualifies as ‘close proximity’ or ‘extensive tract of land’. However, using Natural England’s Accessible Greenspace Standards as a helpful guide, it is suggested that ‘close proximity’ be defined as within 2km (1.25 miles) and an ‘extensive tract of land’ be defined as over 20 hectares (50 acres). Given the diverse nature of the 213 Parishes in Cornwall, it is acknowledged that this needs to be a guideline rather than a hard and fast rule.

In addition to these criteria, Planning Practice Guidance states 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

It is important to be aware that green/open spaces in your area may have existing statutory designations such as:

- Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve/Local Nature Reserve
- Conservation Area
- Public Rights of Way



Existing designations should not preclude designating as a Local Green Space, but understanding the context is useful so that this can be taken into account when developing policies or applying for designation as Local Green Space.

You can find out which designations cover your area by using Cornwall Council's online mapping system. The Neighbourhood Planning Team at Cornwall Council can provide further advice on this.

Process Overview

The rest of this document is a guide for how you might approach an audit of your green spaces for the purposes of designating Local Green Space and improving the quality of your Green Infrastructure network. This flow diagram is an overview of that process.





Step 1 –Establish the Baseline

Regardless of whether you want to designate Local Green Spaces as part of your Neighbourhood Plan, it is a good idea to identify the green/open spaces in your area as part of building the evidence base. This can be done using local knowledge, site visits and by using Cornwall Council's online mapping system. The Neighbourhood Planning team will be able to provide more information on this and access to the mapping system.

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Step 2 - Local Green Spaces Audit

To designate Local Green Spaces through your Neighbourhood Plan, it is important to show you have followed a sound methodology and have appropriate evidence to support the designation. The Local Green Spaces Audit form below can be used as a template in identifying which sites are suitable for Local Green Space designation and ensure that appropriate evidence is collected to support any application.



LOCAL GREEN SPACES AUDIT FORM	
Site Information	
Name of Site	
Grid Ref	
Plan reference (include map of the area showing all candidate sites)	
Ownership of site (if known)	
Is the owner aware of the potential designation and are they supportive? (Please note, objections from site owners will not necessarily prevent designation)	
Description of the site (use, condition, accessibility)	
Is the site covered by any statutory designations (e.g. SSSI, Public Rights of way etc)	
Community served by this site (does the site serve the whole settlement or a particular area or group of people?)	
Planning Context	
Is there currently a planning application for this site?	
Is this site allocated for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan?	
If the answer is yes to either of the above questions, could part of the overall space still be used as local green space?	
Size and Character of the Area	
Area of proposed site (Local Green Spaces should not be 'extensive tracts of land', suggest under 20 ha as a guideline)	
Is the site 'local in character'? (Does the site feel like it is part of	



the local area? How does it connect physically/ visually/ socially?)					
Need for Local Green Space					
Is there a need for green space of this type at this location? (Evidence for this may include questionnaire responses, allotment waiting list etc depending on the type of green space)					
How far is the green space from the community that it serves? (Local Green Spaces should be in close proximity, suggest within 2km as a guideline)					
Are there any barriers to the community accessing the site from their homes?					
Evidence to show that the Green Space is 'demonstrably special' to the local community					
Evidence of Support from the Town or Parish Council (evidence of support may include Council minutes or a letter/email)					
Evidence of support from other local community groups, community leaders (councillors, MP etc) and other groups (wildlife trust, CPRE etc) (evidence of support as above)					
Does the green space hold 'a particular local significance' for reasons of:	Beauty	Historic significance	Recreational value	Tranquillity	Richness of wildlife
	Other (please state):				
What evidence is there to support this local significance?					

Step 3 – Identify Opportunities for Improvement

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Following the auditing process, there is a good opportunity to look at your sites as an overall network and identify areas for improvement. You might consider carrying out a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

Questions you might consider include:

- Do we have a variety of types of sites or is there a lot of the same type? (e.g. all play parks and no allotments for example, no provision for older children)
 - Going forward, what sorts of green spaces would we like to see in the parish? Is there a demand from the community?
 - Can existing sites be enhanced to make them more multi-functional (i.e. fulfilling several different functions)?
- Are the sites in good condition?
 - If not, what improvements could be made? Who is responsible for the maintenance of the site?
- Are the sites safe and accessible to all e.g. is it attractive and enjoyable to people of all ages?
 - If not, how can sites be made safer and more accessible?
- Are the sites usable all year round?
 - If not, what would make them usable in all seasons?
- Is the site engaging – are there things to look at and do?
- Does the site appear to have a sense of place? Is it a nice place to be?
- Is this a space that would improve peoples' health and physical and mental wellbeing?
- Are the sites well connected?
 - If not, are there opportunities to improve linkages between sites (for people and for wildlife e.g. wildlife corridors)
- How are the edges of the space defined? Are there enough accesses in and do the boundaries encourage or discourage people and wildlife?
 - Are there opportunities to improve the boundaries of the site and introduce space for nature?
- Are there opportunities to enhance the sites in terms of:
 - *Wellbeing* – how people access and use these sites, community cohesion, recreation and leisure opportunities
 - *Wildlife* – natural spaces, habitats and species and connectivity (e.g. wildlife corridors)
 - *Water* – can the site play a role in drainage and natural flood management in the parish?
- Are there any threats to these green spaces? (now and in the future in terms of maintenance, resilience to climate change, development etc)
 - If yes, how might we avoid or mitigate that?

Through this process, issues will arise that are not deliverable through planning policy. The Green Infrastructure Action Plan template below can be used as a starting point for your parish to go beyond

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what planning policy can achieve and take community action to achieve environmental growth in your area. The information gathered through the Neighbourhood Planning process should serve as an excellent base for this as often issues crop up which are not planning related, but vital to the community all the same.

The template has been populated with some examples of the kind of actions an action plan might include (in this case using the fictional examples of Exemptown and Othertown)



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Proposal	Lead	Possible Partners	Timescale	Comments
Create semi-natural habitat in part of Exampletown Park to increase wildlife	Community Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowner Cornwall Council Town council Cornwall Wildlife Trust Ecologists 	1 – 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Cornwall Council's Grow Nature website for advice and inspiration
Upgrade old play equipment to natural play equipment in Exampletown Park	Community Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowner Cornwall Council Town council Groundwork Local children and families 	1 – 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at Cornwall Council's Out to Play Guide for inspiration and guidance Involve local children in design Look at funding options Consider ongoing maintenance (town council, residents association?)
Make the community garden in Exampletown more accessible for all	Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land owner Cornwall Council Disability Cornwall Community groups 	1 – 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider raised beds Ensure there is seating, shelter and shade Consider getting local nursery/ school to bring the children on a class trip
Link Exampletown woodland to Othertown woodland	Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowners Cornwall Council Town council Cornwall Wildlife Trust 	5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was identified as a priority project for CIL through the Neighbourhood Planning questionnaire
Create a public open space at the ruins in Othertown	Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowners Cornwall Council Historic England Archaeologists Groundwork Community groups 	5 – 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Cornwall Council's Grow Nature website for advice and inspiration Public engagement to generate ideas Look at funding options Consider ongoing maintenance (town council, residents association?)
Create permissive path between Exampletown and Othertown	Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowners Cornwall Council Community groups 	5 – 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation over best route Consider safety and any land designations



Step 4 - Planning Policy Development

Once the community has decided which green spaces to designate, you can then draft a Local Green Spaces policy for your plan. This should include a map with the green spaces clearly marked on.

Below is an example of some policy wording:

The following open spaces are designated as Local Green Spaces in accordance with paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

xxx LIST SITES xxx

Development that would harm the openness or special character of a Local Green Space or its significance and value to the local community will not be permitted unless the proposal can demonstrate very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.

On green spaces already in use as formal open space, sports provision or formal pitches, development proposals affecting these designated spaces will only be supported where:

- (a) the development would be subordinate to the use of the site and enhance the use of the playing field by providing play or sports equipment; or**
- (b) the development would enable the provision of community facilities such as a clubhouse or changing rooms and would not by means of scale, siting and design of the proposal harm the character, appearance and the use of the space; or**
- (c) it can be shown that the area of open space affected is surplus to requirements; or**
- (d) the loss resulting from the development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in a suitable location, accessible to the community.**



In addition to the policy designating Local Green Spaces, your community may wish to look at other ways to strengthen green infrastructure through the Neighbourhood Development Plan policies.

Policy themes could include:

- Design quality – by including a policy on design quality, you can specify what is important to your community when it comes to a new development. This would normally include green infrastructure features that help a development fit in, reduce its impact on local drainage and/or flood risk, enhance local character, provide community space, and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Protecting the character and heritage of the area, including green spaces and natural features
- Ensuring any development adjacent to open spaces is of an appropriate scale and character (NB. this would need to be defined as appropriate to the individual setting)
- Identifying specific enhancements needed for green spaces. This could include collecting of evidence and agreeing local views on improvements that could be made to prioritise spending of the Community Infrastructure Levy in your parish.
- Creation of new areas of green spaces within new developments
- Opportunities to increase connectivity between sites, creating linkages between green spaces and active travel networks. Again, this could inform the spending of the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Protecting sites as Blue-Green Corridors to help ameliorate flooding issues in your parish
- Present opportunities to protect and enhance wildlife within your parish and deliver wildlife improvements (or biodiversity ‘net gain’)

Step 5 – Implementation

Once completed, your Neighbourhood Plan will pass through the formal process, including consultation, examination and referendum.

There is more information on this process on the Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:

[Testing and approving the plan](#)

If the plan successfully passes through these processes and receives majority vote at referendum, the plan will then be adopted by Cornwall Council and will become a statutory document, this will include the Local Green Space Designations.

In addition to the spaces designated in your plan and related policies, your parish will hopefully have an action plan (section 3) to take forward to achieve environmental growth in your community.

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