

Local Green Space Methodology

If you would like to discuss the draft methodology for identifying Local Green Space with the team please use the contact details below:

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This information can be made available in large print, braille, audio, and in other languages. Please contact the Planning and Housing Policy Team on 01524 582383 for more details.

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Policy Background.....	2
National Planning Policy.....	2
Local Planning Policy.....	3
Local Evidence Base	3
Moving forward	4
Local Green Space Methodology objectives.....	4
Methodology.....	4
Stage 1 – Planning the assessment.....	4
Stage 2 – Call for sites.....	5
Stage 3 – Assessment.....	5
Stage 4: Review of the assessment	8
Please let us know what you think.....	9
Appendix 1.....	10
Appendix 2.....	11

Introduction

- 1.1 Lancaster City Council needs your help to identify important areas of local green space across the district. These are areas that hold a particular importance to the community, and if designated in the Local Plan would be protected from inappropriate development.
- 1.2 This is a new area of local planning, offering members of the public the opportunity to identify areas of green space which are of value to them. This could be because of the wildlife they are home to, their beauty, their cultural or heritage significance, the tranquillity they provide or their recreational value.
- 1.3 Whilst areas of open space and land of environmental value have always been identified by the council, designation as a local green space is something different. Introduced by central government in 2012 the designation focusses on the importance of identified areas to their local community. Importantly national planning policy makes it clear that this designation should be consistent with wider planning policy for an area and should look to complement investment in the provision of new homes and employment opportunities and other essential services. It should not be seen as means to stop these wider development needs.
- 1.4 To help identify potential areas the council have prepared a draft Local Green Space Methodology. The draft methodology sets out the process for submitting potential sites to the council for consideration and identifies the criteria through which the council propose to assess sites for allocation in the Local Plan.
- 1.5 **We would like your help in finalising the methodology and invite comments on this draft document by 27th February 2015.**

Policy Background

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 In March 2012 the Coalition Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹, introduced a new Local Green Space designation. This designation allows local communities, through the Local Plan process, to identify areas of local green space which are important to them and which should be provided special protection.
- 2.2 The NPPF makes clear that the designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or areas of open space and should only really be used in the following circumstances:
 - Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community which 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.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

- 2.3 When designated the NPPF states that protection for such areas should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.
- 2.4 Additional guidance on this new designation is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)².

Local Planning Policy

- 2.5 Planning policy at a local level is established in the Local Plan for Lancaster District. Through a series of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) the Local Plan sets out the planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications and identifies areas of the district to be allocated for development and areas that should be protected.
- 2.6 The Local Plan is currently being reviewed and provides the ideal opportunity to ensure that, as well as identifying areas for development, areas which are important to local communities are also identified and protected.
- 2.7 The council has already undertaken substantial work on this review having prepared and adopted a new Development Management Plan document in December 2014. This document sets out the detailed planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications. Policies for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and green infrastructure are included within this document.
- 2.8 The Development Management document will be accompanied by the Land Allocations document. This document when adopted will identify the location for future housing, employment, leisure and retail opportunities in the district, as well as those areas of environmental, recreation and historical importance which should be protected and enhanced.
- 2.9 The council consulted on the Preferred Options version of the Land Allocations document in October 2012. Whilst the document did include allocations for the natural environment and green infrastructure it did not include any Local Green Space designations.

Local Evidence Base

- 2.10 In the Preferred Options version of the Land Allocations document, the council has already identified a substantial network of green infrastructure and open space provision across the district, over 2,739 ha of land with recreation and amenity value.
- 2.11 These areas were identified using evidence from the council's PPG17 Study: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities. Refreshed in 2010 the study contains a detailed audit of open space provision across the district identifying 9 different types of open space (allotments, amenity space, natural and semi-natural green space, parks and gardens, cemeteries and church yards, children, young people, green corridors, and outdoor sports facilities). The study focuses on areas over 0.2 ha in size or on those areas of community value (i.e. play areas and some valuable amenity space falls below this size).

² <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Moving forward

- 2.13 Since preparing the Preferred Options Land Allocations document the council have reviewed several areas of its evidence base. In undertaking this review it is clear that further work is required on the Land Allocations document. The council are therefore proposing to review the content of the Preferred Options document and prepare a new draft document for consultation in early 2016.
- 2.14 As part of this review the council would like to investigate whether there are any areas across the district which should be designated as Local Green Space. If successful these areas will be designated for protection in the emerging Land Allocations document.
- 2.15 Whilst the council has already undertaken a substantial audit of existing areas of green and open space provision across the district it is recognised that Local Green Spaces are something different. They provide an additional level of protection and recognise the special and intrinsic value of an area to the local community. The designation will not therefore be appropriate to most green areas or areas of open space of the district and the council will need to make a distinction between areas of local importance and those areas that perform a wider role.
- 2.16 This methodology sets out the process through which areas can be submitted to the council for consideration and identifies the proposed methodology through which sites will be considered and assessed for inclusion in the Land Allocations document.

Local Green Space Methodology objectives

- 3.1 The following objectives have been identified:
- To provide a robust evidence base to inform the production of the Land Allocations document;
 - To provide local communities with the power to identify those areas of green spaces valued by local people; and
 - To provide the framework through which green spaces important to local communities will be assessed for designation through the Land Allocations document.

Methodology

Stage 1 – Planning the assessment

- 4.1 The NPPF establishes the concept of Local Green Space designation and provides some guiding principles but it leaves local authorities, in partnership with local communities, to determine how to implement this at the local level.
- 4.2 The council have prepared this document describing how such areas should be identified and assessed. The draft methodology expands on the principles established in the NPPF to provide a consistent and transparent methodology for identifying Local Green Spaces. Importantly this is only a draft and we need your help to finalise this.

- 4.3 Once the methodology is finalised the council will undertake a call for sites exercise specifically targeted at the identification of Local Green Spaces. It will then apply the proposed methodology to assess sites and determine whether they should be designated in the Land Allocations document.
- 4.4 In applying the methodology the council will establish a Local Green Space working group. This group will be used to help assess sites and help determine whether they meet the criteria established in this methodology. It is proposed that the group will consist of the following members:

Council representatives:

- conservation officer
- development management officer
- public realm development manager
- leisure development manager

Other representatives:

- Lancaster Civic Society
- Lancaster District Green Space Forum
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Stage 2 – Call for sites

- 4.5 Once the methodology is finalised the council will undertake a call for sites exercise. A draft call for sites form is appended to this document (Appendix 2).
- 4.6 Communities will be asked to complete and return the form to the Planning and Housing Policy team with a site plan of the area they would like to be designated. Importantly the onus is on the applicant(s) to supply evidence to support the designation.
- 4.7 The call for sites will be widely publicised using the council’s website, social media, the planning policy consultation database, press releases, parish councils and local green space action groups.

Stage 3 – Assessment

- 4.8 Having obtained information on potential sites the council must then assess their suitability for designation as a Local Green Space in the Land Allocations document. The proposed criteria for undertaking this assessment are described below. These have been informed by the principles established in the NPPF and the additional guidance provided in the NPPG.
- 4.9 The council welcomes your views on this. A flow chart detailing the process is contained in appendix 1.

<p>Test 1</p>	<p>Does the site already have planning permission for an incompatible alternative use or is it allocated or likely to be allocated for an incompatible alternative use?</p>	<p>The NPPG is clear that Local Green Space designations will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development or where it is allocated or proposed for development in the Local Plan.</p> <p>The first step will be to assess the past planning history of each site submitted for designation.</p> <p>Sites with existing planning permission or a draft allocation will not be considered appropriate, and no further assessment will be carried out.</p> <p>The exception may be where it can be demonstrated that the proposed or approved development would be compatible with the Local Green Space designation or where it is demonstrated that the planning permission or proposed allocation is no longer capable of being implemented. In such instances the council would continue to assess the sites potential designation as a Local Green Space.</p>
<p>Test 2</p>	<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community they serve?</p>	<p>The NPPF states that to be designated as a Local Green Space the area should be reasonably close to the community they serve.</p> <p>The proposed Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community it serves. Sites which are entirely isolated from the community will not be considered appropriate.</p> <p>As a guide the council propose to define 'reasonably close' as within 5 minutes and 10 minutes walking time.</p> <p>It is recognised that some discretion may be needed depending on the size of the community the green space serves, the size and function of the green space itself, why the area is seen as special and the value placed upon it by the community.</p>

<p>Test 3</p>	<p>Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for the identification of Local Green Spaces the council would expect the size of the area to reasonably relate to the community that it serves.</p> <p>The NPPF is clear that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the land is not an extensive tract of land. The council would expect areas to be fairly self-contained with clearly defined edges.</p> <p>Extensive tracts of land on the edge of settlements and blanket designation of open countryside will not be appropriate</p>
<p>Test 4</p>	<p>Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to a local community?</p> <p>The proposed designation of spaces must be based on evidence to demonstrate why the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance. To meet this requirement an area must fulfil one or more of the following criteria:</p>	<p><u>Beauty:</u></p> <p>This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to townscape, landscape, character and/or setting of the settlement.</p> <p>To be identified as a Local Green Space the council would normally expect an area to contribute significantly to the local identity and character of the area, playing an important role in defining the sense of place of an area and where relevant in defining the physical form and layout of the settlement.</p> <p><u>Historic significance:</u></p> <p>The site is viewed to be of local significance because of its historic importance to the local community. This could be because of the location of a historic asset within it or because of the areas role in providing the setting for heritage assets or other locally valued landmarks.</p> <p><u>Recreational value</u></p> <p>The site holds a local significance for recreation providing an important asset for the community for a particular recreation activity or for a range of activities.</p> <p><u>Tranquillity</u></p> <p>The site submitted is viewed to be of importance to the local community because of the tranquillity it provides offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.</p> <p>This is a subjective assessment and the council will require clear justification why an area is of particular value in relation to this criteria.</p> <p><u>Richness of wildlife:</u></p>

		<p>The site is viewed to be of local significance because of the wildlife it is home to.</p> <p>It should be noted that in considering this criterion the council will require justification as to why existing levels of protection e.g. Biological Heritage Sites, SSSIs are insufficient and why the area warrants additional protection beyond that currently provided.</p>
		<p><u>Other Reason:</u></p> <p>The proposed site has a particular local significance for the community for reasons other than those identified above.</p>

- 4.10 In all instances the council requires evidence as to why an area is of particular significance to the local community and why it warrants additional protection compared to other areas of open green space across the district. This could include for example photographic evidence, wildlife reviews or headcount data. The council reserves the right to request additional evidence where needed.
- 4.11 In view of the subjective nature of this assessment, the council will hold a workshop with the Local Green Space Working Group in order to utilise their expertise and help determine the community value of sites. This may include additional assessment to verify evidence if needed.

Stage 4: Review of the assessment

- 4.12 Following stage 3 a detailed report will be prepared setting out the conclusions of the assessment. The report will contain an assessment and conclusion for each of the sites submitted. It will be published on the council’s website as part of the Local Plan evidence base and will be used by the council to determine which areas should be designated as a Local Green Space in the Draft Land Allocations document. The Draft Land Allocations document is currently scheduled for consultation in early 2016.
- 4.13 If the space is going to be proposed for designation within the Draft Land Allocations document, the council will contact the land owners (if known) in advance of consultation.
- 4.14 It should be noted that formal designation will only occur once the Land Allocations document is adopted.

Please let us know what you think...

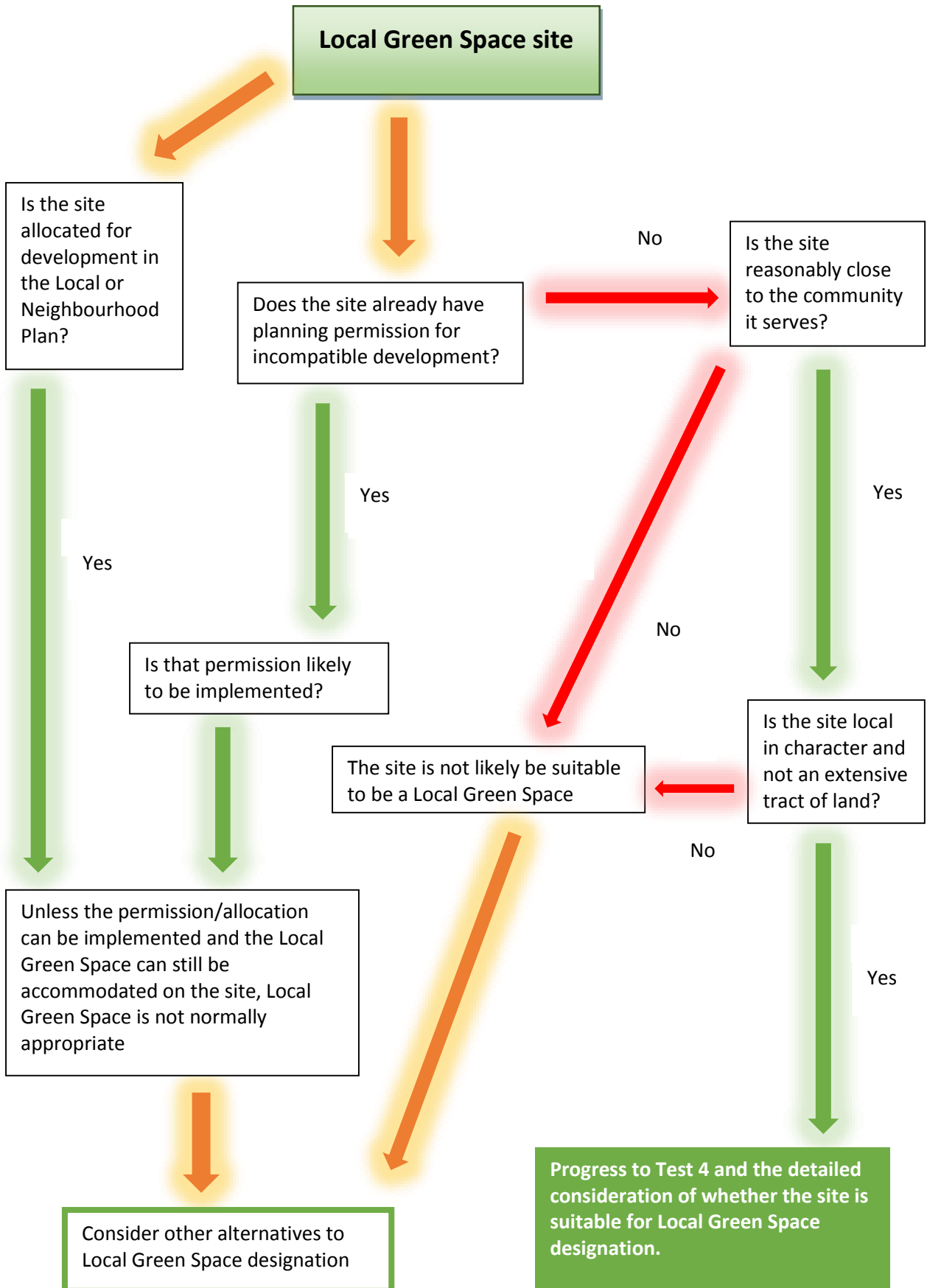
5.1 The methodology being consulted on is only a draft. The council needs your help to finalise it. Please get involved and tell us what you think.

5.2 Comments can be submitted by email to the following address planningpolicy@lancaster.gov.uk or if you would prefer written comments can be sent by post to:

Planning and Regeneration
PO Box 4
Lancaster Town Hall
Dalton Square
Lancaster
LA 1 1QR

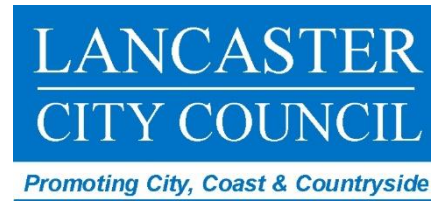
5.3 **Comments are requested Friday 27 February 2015.**

Appendix 1 – Local Green Space Flow Chart



Appendix 2

Draft Local Green Space Call For Sites



Please use this form to give information on land you would like to be considered for designation as a Local Green Space. A separate form should be completed for each area suggested. **A map showing the boundary for each suggested area must also be provided.**

1. Personal Details	
Name	
Organisation (where relevant)	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone number	
Email address	
2. Name and address of proposed site (Please attach a site plan showing boundaries)	
3. Ownership Details	
Details of the land owner if known	

Is the land owner aware of the proposal to designate their land?		
Is the land owner supportive of the proposals to designate their land?		
4. Site History		
What is the site currently used for?		
Is the site subject to a planning permission for development? (If yes please provide details)		
5. Site Support		
Is the proposal to designate the space supported by any of the following? (If yes please provide details)	A friends group	
	Local community group	
	A Parish Plan	
	Parish Council	

	Local Councillor	
	MP	
	Other group/organisation	
6. Site Characteristics		
<p>Is the site an extensive tract of land?</p> <p>(Please provide details of the size of the site)</p>		
<p>Is the site within reasonable close proximity to the community that it serves?</p>		
<p>How does the site connect physically, visually and socially to the area?</p>		

The proposed designation of spaces must be based on evidence to demonstrate why the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance. To meet this requirement an area should meet one or more of the following: be of local significance because of its beauty; be of local significance because of its historic importance to the local community; be of local significance because of its recreational value; be of local significance because of the tranquillity it provides; be of local significance because of the wildlife it is home to; or because of any other reasons.

To help in this assessment please complete the relevant boxes below providing evidence to support your answer.

In all instances the council requires evidence as to why an area is of particular significance to the local community and why it warrants additional protection compared to other areas of open green space across the district. This could include for example photographic evidence, wildlife reviews or headcount data. The council reserves the right to request additional evidence where needed.

How is the proposed space of particular local significance in respect of its beauty?

How is the proposed space of particular importance in respect of its historic significance?

How is the proposed space of particular local significance in respect of its recreational value?	
How is the proposed space of particular local significance, in respect of its tranquillity?	
How is the proposed space of particular local significance, in respect of its wildlife value?	

Are there any other reasons why the proposed space has a particular local significance for the local community?	
7. Please provide any other information that you consider would be helpful to the assessment	

When completed, please send this form to: Rebecca Richards, Planning and Housing Policy, Lancaster City Council, PO Box 4, Town Hall, Lancaster, LA1 1QR or email it to planningpolicy@lancaster.gov.uk
Signature:..... Date:..... Completed forms should be returned by ?????