

About Local Green Spaces – An Update

Following the recent Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7th October the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group feel that there is a need to release some clarification on a number of the points raised at the meeting regarding the proposal for designation of Local Green Spaces in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

It is our considered understanding that the identification of Local Green Spaces in the Draft Plan **does not fall** under the 1906 Open Spaces Act, which refers to the purchase of land by Local Authorities to provide Green Spaces for a community.

For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan the reference to Local Green Spaces comes under the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 (Paragraph's 99 -101). Should any proposed designation proceed following statutory consultations and referendum **it confers no change** of current ownership, access rights or land use.

The Localism Act and NPPF allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them and if the land meets some very specific criteria. Indeed, the NPPF states that "Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b. 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 wildlife; and
- c. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land."

The emerging Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan makes provision for Local Green Spaces to be designated through a Neighbourhood Plan.

Each local authority has its own rules as to the closeness of the land to the community it serves, and visual value can be important at a greater distance. The land does not have to be owned by the Parish Council or any other part of a Local Authority.

The aim of designation is to protect these special green areas in the longer term as it is covered by an Act of Parliament, being part of a formalised and adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

The overriding purpose of the current consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and its policies is to validate all proposals made in the plan and as such all representations, be they supportive or unsupportive are welcomed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Good examples of how local Parish or Town Councils have incorporated Local Green Space designation into Neighbourhood Plans are:

The Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan

<https://www.silsoeparishcouncil.org/NeighbourhoodPlan>

Arlesey Neighbourhood Plan

<http://www.arleseytc.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

Both plans are now adopted following all statutory consultations and referendum.

We hope this clarifies the situation but are always happy to do our best to answer queries on any aspect of the draft plan.

With regards the proposed designation at Chicksands Private the proposal was well-meaning and intended to help protect the land for the estate community, not impact its future use. As with any draft plan it will be shaped by responses received and amendments to the plan and policies are to be expected as a result of this consultation. We apologise for any confusion or angst caused by inclusion of this proposal in the draft plan and assure residents of our best intentions at all times.

The Campton & Chicksands Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.