

Little Abington Parish Council: Update on Local Green Spaces.

1. Received from SCDC 30 June 2017

2. Received from SCDC 20 July 2017

1. Local Green Spaces – Review at request of the Inspectors - Progress report

The Inspectors wrote to the Council in March 2017 with their preliminary conclusions on the Local Green Spaces (LGS) policy and the sites proposed to be designated. Their view is that the Council did not set the bar high enough when it carried out the assessment of this new national type of local space designation during the preparation of the submitted Local Plan. They particularly referred to the National Planning Policy Framework description of these areas, that they must be '*demonstrably special*', of '*particular local significance*', and the '*Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space*'. They gave a number of examples where they considered sites did not meet these tests.

The Council is carrying out a review of the 172 sites identified in the submitted Local Plan, to reassess each site against the tests and taking close account of the findings of the Inspectors. In doing so we are considering whether sites that are not suitable as LGS should either return to, or become new Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAA) or Important Countryside Frontages (ICF), as advised by the Inspectors. These existing designations in the plan provide protection to suitable sites within village frameworks, but not to the level of green belt type protection which is the effect of LGS.

The emerging review is concluding that village greens, recreation grounds and wildlife areas continue to warrant LGS status. Informal areas of amenity land or play space in housing areas within villages would be more appropriately PVAA. Meadows or fields on the edges of villages have been the most complex to assess, but given the Inspectors' conclusions, and the examples they provided of this type of site, a number will not be recommended for LGS. Whilst they cannot be PVAA as they are outside village frameworks, they are located where countryside policies apply, and once a 5 year supply is regained will have that protection against development.

Whilst the review is still underway, to give you an indication of the emerging recommendation, we anticipate that only around 15% of the LGS in the submitted Local Plan would not be LGS, PVAA or ICF, although most would be outside village frameworks. However, around 50% will remain LGS, with the remaining 35% or so either returning to PVAA (as in the adopted Local Development Framework) or becoming new PVAA.

A report on the LGS review will be considered by the Planning Portfolio Holder at his meeting on 26 July, with the report being published on 18 July. We will advise you on the final report as soon as possible. Once agreed by the portfolio holder the LGS report will be submitted to the Inspectors for their consideration.

As part of the wider local plan process the Inspectors will identify modifications needed to make the plan sound, and this will include any changes to the original 172 LGS sites. These changes will then be subject to public consultation before they make their final report, which we anticipate will take place in the autumn.

2. UPDATE 20 July 2017

Following on from my e-mail which I sent to you on the 30th of June 2017, this e-mail is an update about progress for the Local Green Spaces Review and the Local Plan examination.

Local Green Spaces – Review at request of the Inspectors

At his Planning Portfolio Holder meeting on 26 July, Cllr Robert Turner will consider a report which reviews the Local Green Spaces at the request of the Inspectors. The report responds to the Inspectors' letter to the Council in March 2017 with their interim findings on the Local Green Spaces (LGS) policy and the sites proposed to be designated. Their view is that the Council did not set the bar high enough when it carried out the assessment of this new national type of local space designation during the preparation of the submitted Local Plan. They particularly referred to the National Planning Policy Framework description of these areas, that they must be 'demonstrably special', of 'particular local significance', and the 'Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space'. They gave a number of examples where they considered sites did not meet these tests.

Council officers have carried out a review of the 172 sites identified in the submission Local Plan, to reassess each site against the tests and taking close account of the findings of the Inspectors. In doing so we have considered whether sites that are not suitable as LGS should either return to, or become new Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAA) or Important Countryside Frontages (ICF), as advised by the Inspectors. These existing designations in the plan provide protection to suitable sites within village frameworks or adjoining village frameworks, but not to the level of green belt type protection which is the effect of LGS.

The review has concluded that most of the identified village greens, recreation grounds and wildlife areas continue to warrant LGS status. Informal areas of amenity land or playspace in housing areas within villages would be more appropriately PVAA. Meadows or fields on the edges of villages have been the most complex to assess, but given the Inspectors' conclusions, and the examples they provided of this types of site, a number are not recommended for LGS.

The results of this review included splitting some sites meaning that 196 parcels of land have been considered instead of 172 included in the submitted Plan. The review recommends that 82 sites are retained as Local Green Space, 24 sites are returned to PVAA, 43 sites are classified as new PVAA, 4 sites return to ICF, and 43 sites are no longer subject to LGS and not PVAA or ICF. The majority of this final category of site cannot be proposed as PVAA because they are outside village frameworks where the policy does not apply. However, they are located where countryside policies apply, and once a 5 year supply is regained will have that protection against development.

Once agreed by the portfolio holder the LGS report will be submitted to the Inspectors for their consideration. Whilst we appreciate that Parish Councils will be disappointed at the changes that need to be made to the Local Green Spaces policy, it is important that the Council responds constructively to the Inspectors' concerns so that the Local Plan can move forward towards adoption and the changes recommended reflect the clear steer provided by the Inspectors.

The report also captures some of the other options available for local communities in respect of those sites now affected by the review. These include Neighbourhood Plans, Community Assets Register, or registering of common land / village greens.

As part of the wider local plan process the Inspectors will identify modifications needed to make the plan sound, and this will include any changes to the original 172 LGS sites they consider need to be made in response to the work the Council has now undertaken. These changes will then be subject to public consultation (before they make their final report), which we anticipate will take place in the Autumn.

The Portfolio Holder Report has now been published and can be seen on the Council's website:
<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s101662/Local%20Green%20Space%20Portfolio%20Holder%20Report%20July%202017%20FINAL.pdf>

There is a summary table of each LGS site in the submitted Local Plan ordered by village at:
<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s101663/Committee%20Report%20Appendix%20A%20%20report%20on%20further%20work%20on%20LGS%20July%202017%20incl.%20Apps%201-4.pdf>

There are village maps showing the outcome of the review
at:<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=55748&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI69858>

Examination hearings closed and next steps:

The final planned hearing sessions has now been held by the Inspector and she has formally closed the hearings. In terms of next steps, the Inspectors will consider the evidence they received from all participants along with all the modifications that the councils have proposed during the examination process, including those in Local Green Space and Monitoring Indicators addressed below. They will consider whether they agree to these modifications and whether other or different modifications are necessary. It is anticipated that they will recommend modifications that they consider likely to be needed to make the Local Plan sound. The Inspector's Proposed Modifications will be subject to public consultation, anticipated to take place in the Autumn. This will allow representations to be made to the Inspectors for their consideration before they issue their final report. If the Inspectors propose different or additional modifications, the council will be able to respond to the consultation.

You can follow progress with the examination on the Council's website:
www.scambs.gov.uk/local-plan-examination