

Hook Neighbourhood Plan



2018 – 2032

Assessment of green spaces within Hook

Introduction

The village of Hook is pepper potted with areas of formal and informal green space. These have been provided as the village grows often alongside larger areas of new developments. Some contain playgrounds and sports pitches, others are laid out as open space or provide an important setting to the buildings surrounding them. Most are fairly small in size and closely related to residential areas but Hartletts Park in the centre is much larger and contains a range of facilities, has parking and also adjoins the community centre. There are a large plots of woodland surrounding the village particularly to the north, as well as smaller pockets within, such as Ashwell's Wood.

What are 'Local Green Spaces?'

Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): 2018

Paragraph 99 of the NPPF says that local communities should be able to identify green spaces of particular importance to them through local and neighbourhood plans. These designations would rule out development other than in very special circumstances and should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that the LGS designation should only be used where the green space 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 or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Paragraph 101 of the NPPF states that the policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

In order to fulfil the requirements, at least one of the five criteria must be met:

- **Beauty** - Beauty is clearly a very subjective concept but we have used the normal meaning of the word i.e. a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight, (Oxford Dictionaries) to assess the sites through site visits.
- **Historic significance** – Consideration is given to how the proposed LGS holds particular local significance with regard to the history of the community or settlement e.g. historic village events, historic buildings, structure or landscape features present on site with a particular connection to the local community.
- **Recreational value** – First hand observations from site visits of how the site is used for recreation e.g. playing sport, informal recreation, children's play etc.

- **Tranquillity** - Tranquillity is considered to be a state of calm, quietude and is associated with a feeling of peace; a state of mind that promotes mental wellbeing. It is a perceptual quality of the landscape and is influenced by things that people can both see and hear around them. Positive tranquillity factors include seeing a natural landscape, natural looking woodland, rivers and open vistas, and hearing natural sounds such as birdsong, an absence of human activity, or even silence. Evidence from site visits were used.
- **Wildlife** – consideration is given to how the proposed LGS holds particular local significance for example through its management for wildlife, or for its role for local wildlife within the settlement, as observed when on site.

Existing protection for green spaces within Hook

In 2018, Hook Neighbourhood Plan steering group, following input from the local community, identified and consulted on 14 sites that might be suitable for Local Green Space designation. The responses to this policy were generally positive and additional sites were also put forward. However, Hart District Council in their response to the plan commented that the NPPF identifies that this designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space, suggesting it is applicable only in limited cases. They also stated that the NPPF contains three criteria against which sites should be assessed and that it was not clear how the sites had been shortlisted against the NPPF criteria and what evidence had been used to support this. Finally it was questioned whether when sites were already protected as Common land a local green space designation was required.

In response to these comments, the Hook Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have reviewed the proposed sites and considered what protection is already afforded to them and whether a Local Green Space designation adds any further value.

The following were identified as sources of existing protection that must be taken into account. They fall into three categories:

a) Designations

Common Land - Common land is land owned by one or more persons where other people, known as 'commoners' are entitled to use the land or take resources from it. Common Land is highly protected and if, for example, a commoner had grazing rights on the land, houses could not be built on it as it would reduce the amount of grazing land. There may be multiple commoners who have rights to do certain activities and therefore any change is hard to secure.

Nature Conservation Designations e.g. SSSI / SINC - Hart has many areas which are noted for their biodiversity value. These areas support a wide variety of species and habitats and form an important part of the network of biodiversity sites within the wider environment. Of note are chalk rivers, tracts of heathland, and parcels of ancient woodland all of which exist in Hook Parish. The importance of these areas is recognised by statutory protection afforded through European Directives and UK legislation. In addition, there are sites of local importance: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These sites will be maintained and development is expected to avoid negative impacts.

Ancient woodland / ancient or veteran trees – These are protected through the NPPF, which states that development resulting in the loss of these habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

b) Planning Policy

Hart Local Plan Policy NBES5: Biodiversity requires that for development to be permitted it should not have an adverse effect on the integrity of an international, national or locally designated site including the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and National and Local Nature Reserves (NNRs and LNRs). The level of protection afforded to these sites is commensurate with their status within this hierarchy. This means that the SINCs located within and adjoining Hook village are already subject to a significant level of protection. The policy states that, if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.

Hook NDP Policy HK3: Protecting and Enhancing the Biodiversity of Hook provides more detail in relation to the key habitats in the parish.

Hart Local Plan Policy I4: Open space, sport and recreation requires that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless it is assessed to be surplus to requirements, it is being replaced or the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss. This approach is supported in national planning policy.

c) Land ownership

Land owned by Hook Parish Council – almost all of the open space within the village is owned and managed by the Parish Council. They have a mandate to manage it for the benefit of the community. Much of it is covered by covenants or Section 106 agreements which restrict its use and make it unavailable for development. Other parcels are required to be handed back to Hart District Council or the landowner if its use changes.

With these existing levels of protection identified, the following tables set out the results of the assessment of sites identified as potentially suitable for Local Green Space designation in the Reg14 consultation.

Local Green Space – Site Evaluation Form

Bell Meadow Corner	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 0.16 ha	
Close proximity to the community	The site is within a residential area adjacent to the centre of Hook village.
Public access?	The area is adjacent to the footway and offers unrestricted pedestrian access.
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	<p>The site comprises a square area of open grass, bounded on two sides by housing built in the 1960's. The site is enhanced with a few trees and shrubs. It is well used by local children for informal recreation such as ball games.</p> <p>There are seats adjacent to the footway, which provide places to sit for those walking from the outer areas of Hook to the shops and services in the centre.</p> <p>This is the only area of green space adjacent to the village centre.</p>
Tranquillity	-
Wildlife	The site contains a few mature trees
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	-
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The land is within a residential area and was transferred to Hook PC by the developer of adjacent housing, to be used for public recreation. The site is subject to restrictive covenants in respect of use and disposal.</p> <p>Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy and owned by Hook Parish Council.</p>	

Hartletts Park	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 2.25 ha	
Close proximity to the community	This site is rectangular in shape, bounded by the A30 at the northern end, Hook Infant and Junior School on the west, Hook Community Centre, tennis courts and a MUGAS beyond, to the south east. There is housing to the north east and a 4-acre site currently providing sheltered accommodation for over 60's (Geffrey's House). Hartletts Park is within walking distance from almost all of Hook.
Public access?	The area has a large car park immediately adjacent to the grassed area and skate park. Access to the tennis courts and MUGA is directly off the car park. This is also the main access into Hook Junior School and provides substantial parking for parents.

	The outdoor gym is popular with the older residents of the neighbouring Geoffrey's House.
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	<p>Large open grass area, with groups of mature trees within the site and around the eastern boundary. This is heavily used seasonally for sports pitches, picnics, informal sport, and dog walking.</p> <p>The play area is one of the 2 that were identified by the Parish Council as Strategic play spaces.</p> <p>Major local events – Hook Fun Run, Party in the Park, Hook Village Show are also hosted on the site.</p> <p>Other outdoor recreational facilities onsite include, an outdoor gym, skate park, tennis courts, MUGAS, a play area.</p> <p>The car park serves the indoor recreation facilities offered by Hook Community Centre, including The Base Youth Club, Hook Community Squash Club, Hartletts Café, Hook Village Nursery.</p>
Tranquillity	-
Wildlife	-
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	Hartletts Park is linked to Mitchell's Field to the south thereby creating a larger area for dog walkers.
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Hartletts Park forms the main recreation centre for Hook. It is adjacent to the facilities at Hook Community Centre, which include indoor sports and a Café. It is identified as of strategic value to the community and future uses are covered by a number of planning policies.</p> <p>Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy and owned by Hook Parish Council.</p>	

Wellworth Park	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 0.86 ha	
Close proximity to the community	Wellworth Park is close to the village centre, schools and housing which was built in the 1980's.
Public access?	There is easy pedestrian and cycle access via entrances along the A30 and two more from the residential areas that bound the majority of the site. The footpaths through the site are heavily used for walking to school and to the village centre by the residents of the adjacent housing.
Beauty	The site contains two groups of very old Jubilee Oak Trees planted approximately 150 years ago. A large part of the site is covered by a blanket tree preservation order.
History	The trees are of historic value.

Recreation	This is a flat, arrow head shaped area of grass, which includes a children's play area and recreation space. The play area is one of the 2 that were identified by the Parish Council as Strategic play spaces.
Tranquillity	-
Wildlife	The Jubilee Oaks have biodiversity value.
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	-
Comments:	
This site is owned by Hook Parish Council, it is used for recreation and a large part is protected by tree preservation orders.	
Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy and owned by Hook Parish Council.	

Mitchells Field	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 1.25ha	
Close proximity to the community	Mitchells Field is a long, narrow, irregular curved area of land. It is surrounded by the Junior School playing field to the north and housing, built in the 1980's. It has no vehicle access, except for grounds maintenance. There is a pedestrian gate into the Junior School from Mitchells Field, so is one of the major walking routes into the school site.
Public access?	A public Right of Way (No.19A) and designated cycleway runs through the site. It is a key walking route from the village centre to the more recent residential areas on the east side of Hook. It also links directly with the tennis courts, Hook Community Centre and Hartletts Park on foot or cycle. There is no appropriate opportunity for vehicle access, making the site unsuitable for housing or other built development.
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	The area is regularly used by the adjacent families for informal sport such as rounders, dog walking and as part of a cycle route.
Tranquillity	-
Wildlife	-
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	Hartletts Park is linked to Mitchells Field
Comments:	
The land is a green link between a residential area, Hartletts Park (and its facilities) and Hook Junior School. It is well used area central to the village. It was transferred to Hook PC, to be used for public recreation. The site is subject to restrictive covenants in respect of use and disposal.	
Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy and owned by Hook Parish Council.	

John Morgan Close – Play Area site	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 0.14ha	
Close proximity to the community	<p>This site, a local equipped area playspace (LEAP), serves the housing immediately adjacent to it and a few better informed residents who have found it!!</p> <p>The area is surrounded on three sides by housing, built in the 1980s and 90s. It is bounded to the north by a large copse, which connects to Rotherwick, so is used by residents as a short cut, rather than walking around the housing development onto the nearby RoW.</p>
Public access?	There is unimpeded access.
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	A small Play Area within an area of large trees. Typical of many such small play areas provided as part of developments in the 1980's and 90's.
Tranquillity	Relatively tranquil part of the village
Wildlife	-
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>This land was conveyed to Hook PC and it comprised a small play area required under the S106 agreement. A new play and recreation is being created as part of the development to the east of the village.</p> <p>Local Green Space designation is not appropriate. The site has very local use, but is one of a number of such sites in the village and is not demonstrably special.</p>	

Coal House Corner	
Privately owned, 0.17ha	
Close proximity to the community	Yes
Public access?	Yes
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	-
Tranquillity	-
Wildlife	Natural pond with some biodiversity value – see Hook Parish Plan LBAP p58 and the area is kept semi natural to encourage wildflowers and wildlife.
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	-
Comments:	

Common Land owned by Lord Malmesbury, but managed by Hook Parish Council - Size 0.17 ha

Local Green Space designation is not necessary as this is Common Land.

Varndell Road/Sheldons

Owned by Hook PC. Size 0.96 ha without bowls club, 1.11 including bowls club

Close proximity to the community	The site is at the western end of the developed part of Hook and serves 250-300 homes in its immediately vicinity.
Public access?	There is ample pedestrian access to the site. There is a car park at the eastern end of the site, and a vehicle lay by at the other end.
Beauty	The norther boundary is defined by both mature and naturally seeded tress and shrubs. In the winter there are views across the open field beyond, although planning permission has been granted for 70 dwellings in that field.
History	-
Recreation	The site is 'L' shaped with a play area and football kickabout space in the rectangular section and attractive shrubs in the 'foot' section. It is bounded to the south by the Hook Bowls Club and to the north buy a fields, which will soon have housing on, so the site will provide recreation for these new homes. Along the northern boundary there is an informal footpath, which is heavily used for dog walking. This links with the wider with the rural footpath network.
Tranquillity	As the site has no vehicle access and links to the rural footpath, this is a fairly tranquil walking route.
Wildlife	Typical of this edge of village location.
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	-

Comments:

Part owned by Hook PC and part by Persimmon Homes

Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy and partly owned by Hook Parish Council.

King George V Playing Field (KGV)

Owned by Hook PC, as a Charity under the Fields in Trust Scheme. It is also a Registered Village Green. 2 ha in size

Close proximity to the community	No
Public access?	Yes
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	Yes – cricket square & football pitches.
Tranquillity	Yes, when sports aren't being played!
Wildlife	The playing field is in the middle of Hook Common, which is a SSSI site managed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	
Comments:	
Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy, owned by Hook Parish Council. It is also designated as a Village Green and held in Trust.	

Bassetts Mead	
Owned by Hook PC. Size 10.6ha	
Close proximity to the community	Bassetts Mead is within walking distance from the centre of Hook, but primarily serves the adjacent housing in Holt Park (330 homes built around 2005-2008).
Public access?	The site is a designated Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG). The River Whitewater creates a boundary along the eastern side. There is parking and pedestrian access from the A30 along with two entrances within the Holt Park development.
Beauty	-
History	-
Recreation	Heavily used for walking by families and dog owners
Tranquillity	A tranquil accessible area
Wildlife	Yes, due to the River Whitewater and three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) lie within the site.
Extensive tract of land (alone or in combination with other nominations?)	Following completion of the NE Hook development, efforts will be made to connect this SANG with another SANG and other green space to create a beautiful country walk.
Comments:	
Bassetts Mead is a SANG owned by Hook PC. It is managed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on behalf of Hook Parish Council. The river Whitewater runs along one boundary and much of the land is at risk of flooding.	
Bassetts Mead has been given to Hook Parish Council, under a Section 106 agreement, by the developers of the Holt Park housing estate in order to provide an area of recreation for the people of Hook and, in particular, the residents of Holt Park.	
Local Green Space designation is not necessary, it is recreation land covered by planning policy, owned by Hook Parish Council, secured by a S106. It is designated as SANG.	