



Local Plan 2035
Planning for the future

**LOCAL GREEN SPACE ASSESSMENT
METHODOLOGY**

APRIL 2017



Your Borough: Planning for the future

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced a new form of special protection called Local Green Space (LGS), which can only be designated in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. Further details are outlined in paragraph 76 and 77 of the NPPF and the accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) at Appendix 2.
- 1.2 As outlined in the NPPF, a Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The NPPF states that the designation should only be used:
- *Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves*
 - *Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and it holds a particular 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.*

The site must not have an extant permission for development or be allocated for development in the development plan as stated in the NPPG.

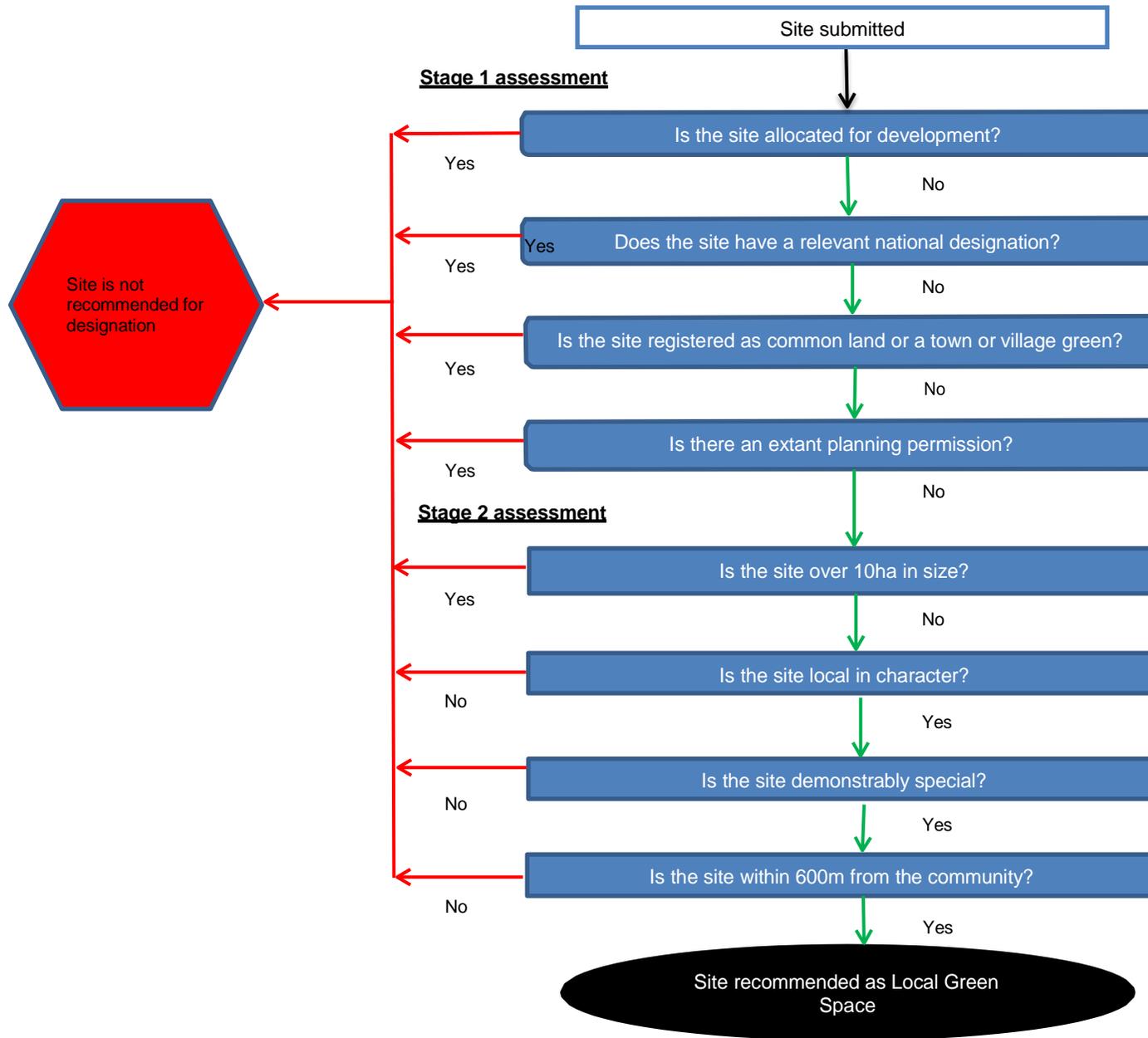
- 1.3 The NPPF explains that “by designating land as LGS, local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances”. The identification of land should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. The LGS designation must not be used in a way that undermines the aim of plan making.
- 1.4 Planning policies for managing development within a Local Green Space are to be consistent with policy for Green Belts. The NPPF sets out in paragraph 89 what is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 1.5 Local Green Spaces offer a higher level of protection for open spaces than is provided by currently adopted local policies for Village Open Spaces and Urban Open Spaces (Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013).

2. Identifying Potential Local Green Spaces

- 2.1 The Local Green Space designation is intended to protect areas of green space that are important to local communities. As a first step in the process instead of the Borough Council identifying sites, Local Councils in the borough and Bedford Borough Council Ward Members were invited to submit sites that they wished to be considered for designation as a Local Green Space using the form in Appendix 3. Evidence was to be submitted to justify the criteria with guidance on where to source the information outlined in the covering note to the form outlined in Appendix 3. Over 180 sites from 24 Local Councils were submitted for consideration. All Local

Councils that submitted sites were also asked to confirm whether they were satisfied that the site boundaries had been plotted correctly by the Borough Council.

- 2.2 The submission of further sites to be considered was invited as part of the Issues and Options Local Plan consultation in late 2015. This was to ensure there was adequate opportunity for potential Local Green Spaces to be brought to the Council's attention. Members of the public were also able to submit details of any sites that Local Councils and Ward Members had not already put forward.
 - 2.3 During the 2015 consultation, a number of new sites were submitted by Parish Councils and members of the public meaning that in total, over 210 sites were submitted for consideration. No sites were submitted for the unparished part of the borough.
 - 2.4 Neither the NPPF nor the NPPG gives any definitive guidance on the process for selecting a Local Green Space. As part of the 2015 consultation, a draft site assessment methodology was published inviting representations on the proposed methodology for selecting sites. Some comments were received during the consultation and where considered appropriate, the methodology has been amended to address the comments. To ensure transparency and consistency, the following process has been used to assess the sites that have been proposed.
3. Assessing the sites
 - 3.1 The flowchart on the following page explains the process of assessment.



- 3.2 All of the sites submitted for consideration were viewed from the road frontage, public right of way, or on the site with the agreement of the land owner. Photographs were taken of each site where the site was visible. The assessment of the sites was separated into two stages. The first stage involved a desktop assessment of the factual information and the second stage was the subjective assessment of the evidence submitted against the criteria.
- 3.3 Stage 1 assessment – The sites did not move onto the stage 2 assessment where one or more of the following situations occurred:
- If a site is covered by any allocation for development in the development plan (Local Plan 2002, Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan or Allocations and Designations Local Plan)
 - If the site already has a national designation for protection i.e. SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), LNR (Local Nature Reserve, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Registered Historic Park and Garden or public right of way which is protected by other legislation
 - If the site is already registered as common land or a town or village green which is protected by other legislation
 - If the site has extant planning permission for development
- 3.4 Stage 2 assessment – As some of the criteria are subjective, a panel of people with relevant skills was formed to undertake the site assessments. This included representatives from the Council's Rights of Way team and where appropriate, the Council's consultant ecologist. Each site submitted was assessed using the criteria below. If a site is considered to meet all of the criteria, it has been recommended for designation.
1. The area is local in character and not an extensive tract of land. The site should feel part of the local area in terms of scale and has a connection with the local area, which could be visually, physically or socially. The site would normally be less than 10 ha (to give an idea of scale an area of 10 ha would accommodate 15 senior football pitches); and
 2. The site promoter must provide evidence to justify that the site is demonstrably special to a local community and it holds particular significance by satisfying at least one of the following areas:
 - a. Beauty – For example, this would include the visual attractiveness of the site, its intrinsic local character, its contribution to the setting of the settlement or contribution to the surrounding landscape character. The site should be exceptional or unique to the area.
 - b. Historic significance. Evidence shows that the site has historic significance. This may include the presence of historic landscape features such as hedgerows, ponds, or ridge and furrow on the site, memorials, or evidence of any important events or rituals that take place on the site which are an exceptional quality or unique to the area.

- c. Recreational value – The current use of the site is a publicly available playing field, publicly available equipped play area, public garden/park, or allotments which regularly have over 80% of the plots being leased to tenants.
 - d. Tranquillity – The CPRE and the Countryside Commission Tranquil Areas – England map 1995, defines tranquil areas as “places that are sufficiently far away from the visual or noise intrusion of development or traffic to be considered unspoilt by urban influences”. The site should be located where it is relatively free of noise disturbance by traffic or visual evidence of human influences such as housing development, agricultural uses and associated buildings and mineral extraction.
 - e. Richness of wildlife – The site should meet one of the following criteria:
 - Documented and verified records of species included in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and/or European Protected Species. Records to be considered should have been recorded since 1995 and come from either within the site or from within a 100m buffer where there is a reasonable likelihood that the species would use the site for living and breeding for a significant part of its life cycle. There should be a significant number of the particular species recorded on the site.
 - Documented and verified records of species of local importance included in the Bedfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and local rare species registers (e.g. County Rare Plant Register, Bedfordshire Notable Bugs list or the Bedfordshire Red List of Breeding Birds). Records should have been recorded since 1995 and come from either within the site or from within a 100m buffer where there is a reasonable likelihood that the species would use the site for living and breeding for a significant part of its life cycle. There should be a significant number of the particular species recorded on the site.
 - Sites which have been recognised as County Wildlife Sites or Local Geological Sites.
 - Sites which form part of the local ecological network, for example a habitat which provides a link or ‘stepping stone’ between other sites recognised for their wildlife importance and provides a significant example of that particular type of habitatand;
3. The site should be ideally within 300 metres, but not more than 600 metres of the community it serves (measured using the route that would be taken to walk, not as the crow flies). The ideal distance is based on the Natural England ANGST (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards) standard which is considered to be an appropriate walking distance.

- 3.5 A table listing all of the sites submitted, organised by Parish has been populated to show the submitted evidence, the Council's assessment, along with a final recommendation stating if a site is to be recommended or not recommended for designation. The assessment tables and accompanying maps shown by parish are included in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Where possible, the land owners of those sites that are recommended for designation as a Local Green Space have been contacted to bring the proposed designation to their attention. The sites that are recommended for designation as a Local Green Space will be subject to consultation along with the assessment sheets and representations can be made during the Spring 2017 consultation.
4. Draft Policy for the Local Plan
- 4.1 In order to control development on designated Local Green Spaces, a policy is proposed to be included in the Local Plan 2035. The NPPF states that policies for Local Green Spaces should be consistent with policy for green belts. The draft policy is as follows:

Local Green Spaces are designated on the Policies Map and have been judged as demonstrably special to the local communities they serve. Development proposals which result in the loss of part or all of a Local Green Space or would have a negative impact on the features that make it locally significant, will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

APPENDIX 1 – Site assessment sheets

- 1) Biddenham and Great Denham
- 2) Bletsoe
- 3) Brickhill
- 4) Bromham
- 5) Cardington
- 6) Carlton
- 7) Clapham
- 8) Dean and Shelton
- 9) Elstow
- 10) Felmersham and Radwell
- 11) Great Barford
- 12) Harrold
- 13) Kempston
- 14) Melchbourne and Yelden
- 15) Milton Ernest
- 16) Oakley
- 17) Odell
- 18) Pavenham
- 19) Ravensden
- 20) Renhold
- 21) Riseley
- 22) Stevington
- 23) Stewartby
- 24) Thurleigh
- 25) Willington
- 26) Wilstead
- 27) Wootton

APPENDIX 2

Extract from National Planning Policy Framework - Local Green Spaces

76. Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.
77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:
- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community 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.

Extract from National Planning Practice Guidance – Local Green Space

Website: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 37-005-20140306

What is Local Green Space designation?

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

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 37-006-20140306

How is land designated as Local Green Space?

Local Green Space designation is for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These plans can identify on a map ('designate') green areas for special protection. Anyone who wants an area to be designated as Local Green Space should contact the local planning authority about the contents of its local plan or get involved in neighbourhood planning.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 37-007-20140306

How does Local Green Space designation relate to development?

Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 37-008-20140306

What if land has planning permission for development?

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.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 37-009-20140306

Can all communities benefit from Local Green Space?

Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town or city.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 37-010-20140306

What if land is already protected by Green Belt or as Metropolitan Open Land (in London)?

If land is already protected by Green Belt policy, or in London, policy on Metropolitan Open Land, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

One potential benefit in areas where protection from development is the norm (e.g. villages included in the green belt) but where there could be exceptions is that the Local Green Space designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 37-011-20140306

What if land is already protected by designations such as National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monument or conservation area?

Different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes. If land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 37-012-20140306

What about new communities?

New residential areas may include green areas that were planned as part of the development. Such green areas could be designated as Local Green Space if they are demonstrably special and hold particular local significance.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 37-013-20140306

What types of green area can be identified as Local Green Space?

The green area will need to meet the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 37-014-20140306

How close does a Local Green Space need to be to the community it serves?

The proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close. For example, if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306

How big can a Local Green Space be?

There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed. However, paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. Consequently blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 37-016-20140306

Is there a minimum area?

Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 37-017-20140306

What about public access?

Some areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may already have largely unrestricted public access, though even in places like parks there may be some restrictions. However, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access (e.g. green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty).

Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present. Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with land owners, whose legal rights must be respected.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 37-018-20140306

What about public rights of way?

Areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may be crossed by public rights of way. There is no need to designate linear corridors as Local Green Space simply to protect rights of way, which are already protected under other legislation.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 37-019-20140306

Does land need to be in public ownership?

A Local Green Space does not need to be in public ownership. However, the local planning authority (in the case of local plan making) or the qualifying body (in the case of neighbourhood plan making) should contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 37-020-20140306

Would designation place any restrictions or obligations on landowners?

Designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 37-021-20140306

Who will manage Local Green Space?

Management of land designated as Local Green Space will remain the responsibility of its owner. If the features that make a green area special and locally significant are to be conserved, how it will be managed in the future is likely to be an important consideration. Local communities can consider how, with the landowner's agreement, they might be able to get involved, perhaps in partnership with interested organisations that can provide advice or resources.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Paragraph: 022 Reference ID: 37-022-20140306

Can a Local Green Space be registered as an Asset of Community Value?

Land designated as Local Green Space may potentially also be nominated for listing by the local authority as an Asset of Community Value. Listing gives community interest groups an opportunity to bid if the owner wants to dispose of the land.

Revision date: 06 03 2014

APPENDIX 3 – Covering note and Application form

Local Green Spaces

Introduction

The NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) introduced a new form of special protection for green areas. This is in addition and is a different designation to the existing urban open spaces and village open spaces contained in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013. The Local Green Space designation is more restrictive. Information can be found at paragraphs 76 and 77 of the NPPF and in the accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance.

The NPPF states that Local Green Spaces (LGS) can only be designated when a plan (Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan) is prepared or reviewed and must be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

Bedford Borough Council is currently preparing a Local Plan with an end date of 2032. The purpose of this letter is to explain more about this new opportunity and to invite local councils to let us know whether there are sites that they wish to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan.

Alternatively, LGS can be included in a Neighbourhood Plan that a local council may produce.

The NPPF explains that “by designating land as LGS, local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances”. However the identification should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. The LGS designation must not be used in a way that undermines the aim of plan making.

Criteria

The criteria for designating a Local Green Space are as follows:

- *Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves*
- *Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and it holds a particular 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.*

The NPPF states that the LGS will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces. In addition, there is no criterion to guide or restrict the location of the LGS but the NPPF states that it is to be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. This would normally be within easy walking distance which other planning policies suggest would be around 300m.

In accordance with the guidance in the NPPF, an area of land that already has extant planning permission or an allocation in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan (or Local Plan 2002) will not be considered for Local Green Space designation. Further details on planning history can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.publicaccess.bedford.gov.uk/online-applications/>. The Allocations and Designations Local Plan and Local Plan 2002 can be accessed on the Council's website at: http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/planning_policy_its_purpose.aspx

For information relating to tranquillity, the CPRE has produced a map which shows the areas of tranquillity. The extract for Bedford Borough is included below.

For information on wildlife value of a site, the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Monitoring Centre (BRMC) can provide information about species on a site and statutory and non-statutory sites. Further details about requesting data is available on their website: http://www.bedscape.org.uk/BRMC/newsite/index.php?c=requests_home

There may be a charge for this service.

There are no rules about how big a LGS should be, however the NPPF states that the designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. There is no minimum size and the Council will consider small sites that meet the criteria.

To qualify for designation the site does not have to be accessible by members of the public, as it may be that there is a historical significance or wildlife value on a site that would be harmed if this was the case. If designation does occur, this does not confer any new right to public access on the site.

The land to be designated does not need to be in public ownership, however it is recommended that the site proposer contact the land owner at an early stage to discuss the proposed designation and seek his or her support. The landowner will have the opportunity to make representations on the draft plan and could object to the designation if they have not been involved in the process.

More information about Local Green Spaces can be found at the following links.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

National Planning Policy Guidance

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

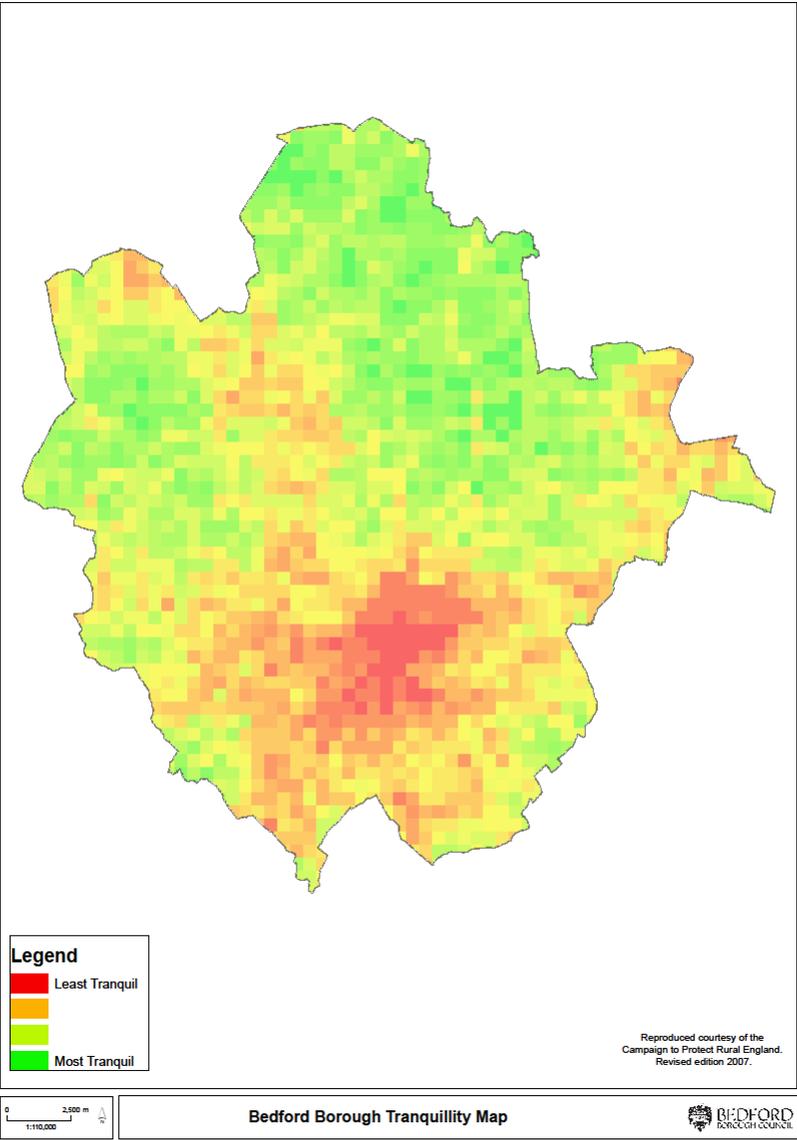
Next steps

If you would like Bedford Borough Council to consider designating land in your area as a Local Green Space in the Local Plan 2032, please fill in the form below. If you have more than one space that you would like us to consider, one form should be completed for each site. Alternatively, if you are considering including Local Green Spaces in a Neighbourhood Plan, then please let us know.

You must include evidence to support the request otherwise we will not be able to justify including the proposal in the Local Plan. A site plan drawn to scale showing the location of the proposed LGS and the surrounding community it serves is also important.

Please return the forms by 5pm on Friday 27 February 2015.

The submitted sites will then be assessed and if we think that they meet the criteria, they will be included in the draft Local Plan 2032. The proposed sites will then be subject to public consultation alongside the plan's other policies and proposals.





Local Plan 2032

Planning for the future

LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Please use this form to put forward any sites that you would like to be considered for designation in the Local Plan 2032 as a Local Green Space.

This form should be submitted electronically. Where you would like to suggest more than one site, use a separate form for each site. **Site submission forms should be sent to planningpolicy@bedford.gov.uk by 5pm on 27 February 2015.**

Please ensure that all questions are answered and a location plan is provided. The council is unable to provide plans or maps for this exercise, but Ordnance Survey maps can be obtained from the OS at <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/> (there may be a charge for this service).

CONTACT DETAILS	
Name	
Job Title	
Organisation	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone Number	
Email address	

SITE DETAILS	
Address of site <i>Please attach location plan on an Ordnance Survey base clearly showing site boundaries, access to the site and area that the site will serve.</i>	
What is the gross site area (in hectares) if known	
What is the current use of the land?	
Who is the Owner of the site <i>Ownership details can be obtained from the</i>	

<p><i>Land Registry for a fee at their website - www.landregistry.gov.uk/</i></p> <p>Is the owner aware of this application?</p>	<p>Yes or No</p> <p>If yes, are they in favour of this application?</p>
<p>Planning history of the site</p> <p>Is there currently a planning application for this site, or an extant planning permission on the site?</p> <p><i>Further details on planning applications are available on the Council's website at: http://www.publicaccess.bedford.gov.uk/online-applications/</i></p>	
<p>Existing designations and allocations</p> <p>Is the site allocated for development in a Local Plan? Does it have a particular designation e.g. Village Open Space?</p> <p><i>Refer to the Local Plan 2002 and the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 at the following link: http://www.bedford.gov.uk/planningpolicy</i></p>	<p>If yes, please provide details</p>

<p>EVIDENCE</p>	
<p>Distance from the community it serves measured in metres (this should be the actual</p>	

walking distance, not 'as the crow flies')	
What evidence is there to show that the space is 'demonstrably special to the local community'?	
What evidence is there to demonstrate that the space has a particular local significance with respect to at least one of the following aspects:	
• Its beauty	
• Historic significance	
• Recreational value	
• Tranquillity	
• Richness of its wildlife	
Please explain why/how this site can be considered 'local in character'? Why is it particularly important to the local community? Why is it valued?	