

# Local Green Spaces Study 2018

Updated Sept 2018

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The town of Blandford Forum is set in the heart of Dorset and has an estimated population of 10,325, is 409 hectares in area and has approximately 4,806 dwellings (2011 census). A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 The village of Blandford St Mary is set in the heart of Dorset, adjacent to Blandford Forum. The population at the 2011 census was 1511 but this figure is forecast to increase by approximately 200 by the end of 2019 as a result of housing development at Dorchester Hill. A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3 The village of Bryanston is set in the heart of Dorset and has an estimated population of 890 (DCC 2013 estimate). A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2. Policy Background National Planning Policy

2.1 In March 2012 the Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), introduced a new Local Green Space designation. NPPF §76 allows local communities, through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan process, to identify areas of Local Green Space which are important to them and which should be provided special protection.

2.2 NPPF §77 makes it clear that the designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and should only be used:

- 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.

2.3 NPPF §78 states that Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

Local Planning Policy (taken from North Dorset District Council’s Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Local Green Spaces)

2.5 Local planning policy includes the saved policies of the North Dorset Local Plan 2003 and the emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011- 2026 Part 1 & 2. Part 1 of the Local Plan was submitted in December 2014 and adopted in 2016. Part 2 of the Local Plan will include site allocations.

2.6 National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection. Potential sites to be designated as Local Green Spaces will be identified through the Local Plan Part 2 document or through the neighbourhood planning process. Prior to that, the Important Open or Wooded Areas identified in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 will continue to be used for development management purposes.

2.7 The emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026, Policy 15: Green Infrastructure proposes that “Neighbourhood Development Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits and the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.”

2.8 Neighbourhood plans, when produced, should therefore seek the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in line with this policy. They should also seek to deliver the key green infrastructure benefits (as set out in Figure 7.1), including on Local Green Spaces and Important Open or Wooded Areas, and contribute to the objectives of the future Green Infrastructure Strategy.

#### Important Open/Wooded Areas within Settlements

2.9 Policy 1.9 Important Open or Wooded Areas (IOWA) is a saved policy of the North Dorset Local Plan 2003. The IOWAs were designated to protect the amenity and character of settlements from the pressure of infill development. All settlements were surveyed and where it was considered that an open or wooded area contributed significantly to the amenity and character of a settlement, it was designated as an Important Open or Wooded Area on the Proposals Map. Both public and privately-owned areas of land were included. The most important criterion used for selection was “the overall contribution that the IOWA gives in visual or amenity terms to public areas within the town or village”, as set out in paragraph 1.54 of the 2003 Local Plan. School Playing Fields and Recreation Grounds were included within Settlement Boundaries and designated as IOWAs in view of their amenity value in both visual and recreational terms. Given the existing IOWA designation accords with the general principles of the Local Green Space designation in seeking to protect important open areas within settlements because of their amenity and character value it is advised that these designations should be taken into account when the designation of Local Green Spaces is being considered. However, it should be noted that the Local Green Space designation may not be appropriate for all IOWAs.

2.10 At the same time as green areas are designated as Local Green Spaces it is advised that IOWA designations should be reviewed / deleted so as to avoid any overlapping designations. The IOWA designations will continue to be saved until they are deleted either: through the North Dorset Local Plan – Part 2: Site Allocations or a neighbourhood plan. If communities do not want to risk losing the protection from development that existing IOWA designations provide, it is recommended that they give consideration to designating these areas, where appropriate, as Local Green Spaces.

2.11 Within the settlement boundaries of the towns and any villages with new boundaries established through Neighbourhood Plans, the Council's policy is supportive of sensitive infill development. The Local Green Space designation can therefore be used to protect green spaces within towns and villages where the community consider infill development to be inappropriate.

### 3. Criteria for assessing Local Green Space

3.1 Conservation Areas and Green Space (as identified in the Local Green Spaces Working Group Report 2015) have been excluded as potential areas of Local Green Space, as these areas are already protected under different specific designations. Private gardens would also normally be excluded, except where a particular case can be made for their inclusion (such as where an area of Local Green Space would have a more coherent shape due to the inclusion of a small area of garden). Sites falling within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB may be included as Local Green Space, where it is deemed that AONB designation may not give sufficient protection to locally valued characteristics.

3.2 Wherever feasible, physical boundaries have been used to define Local Green Space. However, where no suitable boundary exists, other features have been used to demarcate the area, such as the line created by a neighbouring boundary.

3.3 Based on the principles established in the NPPF and Local Planning Policy, four tests have been devised for identifying Local Green Space across the area.

Test 1. Does the site already have planning permission, or has it been allocated for development in the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP)?

- The first stage in the assessment will be to review the planning history of each site to ensure that it is not subject to an extant planning permission and that it has not been allocated for development under the NDLP.
- The Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development, or where it has been allocated for development under the NDLP.
- An exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space designation would be compatible with the planning permission / NDLP allocation, or where the planning permission / NDLP allocation is no longer capable of being implemented.

Test 2. Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?

- The NPPF states that to be designated as a Local Green Space an area should be in reasonably close proximity to the community which it serves.

- PPG requires that if public access is a key factor, then the Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.

Test 3. Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?

- The NPPF makes clear that the area to be designated should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- PPG states that blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.
- Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for an area of Local Green Space, Blandford + considers that any site of more than 10 hectares might reasonably be interpreted as 'extensive' or 'blanket'.

#### Test 4. Is the site demonstrably special to the local community?

The designation of Local Green Space must be based on evidence which demonstrates why the area is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. To pass this test, an area must be demonstrably special and locally significant in one of the following categories:

- Beauty – This relates to the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site, and its contribution to the streetscape, landscape, character or setting of a settlement. To qualify, the site should contribute significantly to local character, for example by defining a sense of place, or by helping to define the physical form of a settlement.
- Historic significance – This relates to the historic importance a site holds for the local community. This could be because it contributes to the setting of a heritage asset or some other locally valued landmark. It might be because the site holds cultural associations which are of particular significance to the local community. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. AONB), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- Recreational value – Sites would need to hold local significance for recreation and be important to the community for a particular recreation activity or range of activities. These could be formal or informal activities.
- Tranquillity – In order to qualify, the site would need to be viewed by local people as important for the tranquillity it provided, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.
- Richness of wildlife – A site would need to be locally significant for wildlife in a way that could be demonstrated. It might, for example, home to species or habitats of principal importance, veteran trees, or locally characteristic plants and animals such as mistletoe. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. SSSI), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- Other reason – Sites might be special and locally significant for reasons other than those identified above. For example, a site might make a particular contribution to defining the individual character of a settlement, or it might be an asset of community value.

#### 4. Consultation

4.1 This assessment will be published on the B+ website as part of the Neighbourhood Plan evidence base, where it can be viewed and commented on by all those taking part in the consultation on the Submission Plan.

4.2 The views of external organisations and the community had already been sought during the Pre-Submission Plan Consultation in April 2016. This document includes comments received while balancing the group and community's wishes.

4.3 The Pre-Submission Plan consultation included an invitation to all known landowners to make representations about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space.

## 5. Areas identified as potential Local Green Space

5.1 The table below provides information about each of the sites proposed as Local Green Space in the Submission Plan of the Neighbourhood Plan. They have been assessed against each of the four tests set out above.

**BLANDFORD + NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE**  
 (Revised June 2018)

Map #	Settlement	Location	Designations	Current Use	TEST 1: existing planning permission or NDLP allocation	TEST 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	TEST 3: extent of area (Ha)	TEST 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)
Policies Map Inset 1 10.1	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Diamond Way	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational Open Space and Play Area	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.24 Ha	Recreational value – The site forms a large green space that is used as an amenity area together with a play area situated in close proximity to the community it serves. This area has been well planned as part of the design of the original development and has served local residents well.
Policies Map Inset 1 10.2	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Westbury Way	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational Open Spaces and two Play Areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves.	0.35 Ha	Recreational value – The sites consist of several pockets of green open space in close proximity to the

								community it serves that are used as amenity areas with two Play Areas. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well as anticipated.
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Policies Map Inset 3 10.3	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Davies Gardens	The Blandford Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	Small memorial garden to two local and well respected Doctors	No	In the town centre	0.01 Ha	Historic significance – The site is a small memorial garden for Dr David and Dr Joan Davies, longstanding serving members of the community and is of particular local significance due to this.
Policies Map Inset 1 10.5	Blandford Hilltop	Badbury Heights	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational open space areas in and around a large housing development with planned play areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	1.63 Ha	Recreational value – The sites form several pockets of open space, as well as some larger green spaces, and buffer zones, situated very close to the community it serves and that are used as amenity areas with planned Play Areas being installed upon completion of land transfers to the Town Council. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development

								and have served local residents well as anticipated.
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Policies Map Inset 1 10.6	Blandford Old Town	Land adjacent Leisure Centre	The Blandford Blandford St Mary Bryanston Conservation Area	Recreational open space used as sports pitches	No	Adjacent to Blandford Forum residential areas, The Blandford School and Blandford Hospital	2.45 Ha	Recreational value –The site forms a large green open space adjacent to the leisure centre. The space is used as sports pitches and needs to be protected due to the existing shortage of sports pitches in Blandford Forum.
Policies Map Inset 1 10.7	Blandford Old Town and Blandford Central	The Trailway	Part of the Trailway is within the Carnborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.	Route of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway now used for informal recreation and Blandford Parkrun	No	Runs through residential areas of the town	3.44 Ha	Recreational value – A walking, cycling and horse riding route that runs along the route of the old railway line and takes you through some picturesque villages of the Blackmore vale. The old railway line closed to rail traffic in 1966 provides an ideal route for a Trailway as it links many of North Dorset's towns and villages. The trail runs along a flat, surfaced three metre wide track suitable for pushchairs,

								mobility vehicles, horses, bicycles and walkers.
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Policies Map Inset 2 10.8	Blandford St Mary	Coppice and Badger Sett	None	Small areas of grassland, scrub and trees with preservation orders that act as a haven for wildlife.	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.33 Ha	Richness of wildlife – The site forms a small area of land which gives its name to the surrounding ring of houses lies at the heart of the new Bryanston Hills housing estate built between 2001 and 2004. The ground includes wildlife activity. Because of the road layout between Dorchester Hill and Blandford St Mary primary school it is the only undeveloped green space within the

								village and provides a welcome area of green within the development.
Policies Map Inset 2 10.9	Blandford St Mary	Bryanston Hills	None	Recreational open space areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.11 Ha	Recreation value – The sites form well-designed open green spaces as part of the originally designed development used as amenity areas.
Policies Map Inset 2 10.10	Bryanston	Between The Cliff and Forum View	Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	A central island surrounded by roads providing an unspoilt entrance to the village and streetscape	No	Central to the village	0.5 Ha	Open area of grassland, wild flowers and trees that is a tranquil and central streetscape for a rural village. It also acts as an area for wildlife
Policies Map Inset 2 10.11	Bryanston	The Cliff	Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	Central green area with telephone box and notice board. Is a historic landmark	No	Central to the village	0.11 Ha	Supports the character of the village providing a location for a telephone box book exchange and noticeboard and a view across open fields. A traditional meeting place

**Addendum to Table above.**

Overton Walk

Policies Map

Blandford Forum

Damory Estate

A green area with trees in the estate centre

No

Within the development it serves

0.5 Ha

Appendix A – TEST 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other) for Crown Meadows

Historic significance – Historically significant and makes a significant contribution to the setting of Blandford Forum.

The site is located on the western edge of the town between the rear of houses on Parklands and the southern side of Bryanston Street. To the south of the site is the floodplain of the River Stour known as the Crown Meadows. Approximately 600m west of the site is The Cliff, a steep escarpment densely wooded with mature deciduous trees. The key characteristics of the site are that it consists of a series of small scale, low lying paddocks used mainly for grazing and hay crop set within an attractive pastoral, parkland landscape. It forms part of the green undeveloped edge to the west of the town, lies within the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area and in addition to its own historic and visual interest forming part of the picturesque Stour Valley; it contributes to the setting of several designated and non-designated heritage assets. The site provided the defensive Fire Zone to defeat potential enemy movement north on the A350 in WW2 and still contains WW2 tank obstacles.

Bryanston Park is of vital importance in preserving the undeveloped setting of the town of Blandford and for understanding its historic development. During the 17th century, the meadows were a busier pastoral landscape crossed with lanes and divided by hedgerow enclosures, but were made into an open parkland landscape during the 18th century. The Deer Park Stables farm complex is set on the edge of this open landscape; although it was built during the mid-to-late 19th century, some minor settlement existed at, or very close to, the site since at least the 17th century and could have been ecclesiastical in origin. The setting of the stables and proposed site has become increasingly urbanised due to the infill behind the suburban villas on White Cliff Mill Street and the developments along Milldown Road, although the stable lodge still retains its isolated position away from the settlement edge. The urban fringe now lies at a distance from the historic core of the town, bordering directly onto Bryanston Park. The only remaining historic urban edge lies to the south of Bryanston Street at Bryanston Cottage. The south of the Park remains undeveloped and its 18th-century boundary remains intact having been incorporated into the Second World War defences. The north of the Deer Park, however, has been

encroached upon significantly since the 1960s by developments on Milldown Road and the buildings and sports fields of the two schools; further development here in the form of a floodlit synthetic sports field has been approved.

The local authority considers the Deer Park to be of local heritage interest and whilst recognising it forms part of a designated heritage asset (Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area) it is felt that the area warrants inclusion on the Council's local list of heritage assets in line with guidance within the NPPF. Development in this part of the Deer Park will comprehensively change it as an asset and substantially harm its interest and setting. Despite attempts to produce a landscaped setting and reduce the harm to the area, the proposed development will have a direct impact upon the asset in terms of its diminution of open space as well as causing harm to the wider setting and appearance of the Deer Park and mitigation would not be sufficient to overcome the substantive harm caused (This information has been taken from NDDC's Crown Meadows Heritage Statement August 2014).

The site is an important defining feature in the setting of Blandford Forum. It is recognised that members of the public cannot access the site freely, however as per Much Wenlock's Neighbourhood Plan, the purpose of protecting this feature in the town is from development. Local people are not against development and have approached development in its area positively.

The size of the site may also come into question, however other spaces larger than the proposed protected space here, such as Silk Hill 8.39 ha in the Market Bosworth Neighbourhood Plan has been designated as a local green space as an important feature in many of the views and vistas identified in the Plan and was a defining feature in the setting of the town on the top of a hill.

Following the overwhelming support from the public, over 6,000 local people said no to development on this site <http://www.saveourcrownmeadows.btck.co.uk/>, and the thorough research of the District Council, it is clear that the site holds particular significance locally and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan should reflect this.