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Local Green Spaces Report

Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan Review

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Title	Local Green Spaces Report
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1. Introduction

1.1 This Local Green Spaces Report has been prepared to support the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan Review and to provide a clear, proportionate evidence base for the designation of Local Green Spaces. The report has been prepared by James Garside Planning on behalf of the Loxwood Parish Council.

1.2 Local Green Spaces are areas that are demonstrably special to the local community. Allocating Local Green Spaces through a Neighbourhood Plan enables communities to protect green spaces of particular importance for their beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, wildlife, or contribution to local character, while remaining consistent with the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3 The adopted Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan allocated 3 no. of Local Green Spaces. The purpose of this report is to assess existing and potential new Local Green Spaces to ensure the Plan remains up to date. Each proposed Local Green Space has been assessed against the relevant criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), including proximity to the community it serves, local significance, and whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land. The report draws on site surveys, local knowledge, community consultation responses, and available planning and environmental evidence.

1.4 The findings of this report inform the Local Green Space policy within the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan and provide justification for the protection of valued green spaces that contribute to the character, wellbeing, and environmental quality of the parish, both now and for future generations.

2. Loxwood

2.1 Loxwood is a rural parish in West Sussex, within Chichester District. The parish is characterised by a compact village settlement set within an attractive countryside setting. The parish contains a range of informal and formal green spaces that are closely related to the built-up area and are integral to the character and function of the village.

2.2 The parish benefits from a wide network of green spaces, including a village green, recreation ground, informal amenity spaces and the Wey and Arun Canal which are in close proximity to homes and community facilities and are regularly used by residents. There are also extensive areas of accessible countryside and woodland surrounding the village. These areas provide important green corridors and open space for recreation space, wildlife and for appreciating the parish's historic landscape.

2.3 These green spaces contribute significantly to the local distinctiveness of Loxwood and are valued for a range of reasons, including opportunities for recreation and social interaction, visual amenity, tranquillity, biodiversity, and their role in reinforcing the parish's rural setting.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Policy HC2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a framework for identifying Local Green Spaces through a Neighbourhood Plan:

> "Local and neighbourhood plans may designate land as Local Green Space where this would safeguard green areas of particular value to the local community. Local Green Space should be limited to situations where the land concerned is." (paragraph 106).

3.2 It also defines the requirements for the designation of Local Green Spaces:

> "a) in 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 its wildlife; and
>
> c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land."

4. Site Selection Process and Methodology

Site identification

4.1 The process of identifying the sites to assess began with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan which identified the following three sites as Local Green Spaces. These had been identified through a combination of local knowledge, review of existing open space and environmental designations, and feedback from local residents. Maps of these sites can be seen in Appendix 1.

- Land at North Hall
- Jubilee Gardens
- Loxwood Sports Association

4.3 Further sites were identified by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and then through a public consultation that took place in January 2024. Feedback on these sites was sought through the public consultation.

- Land at Nursery Green

Methodology

4.4 The sites identified were assessed against the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), below. The methodology follows national planning policy and guidance and reflects established good practice for neighbourhood plan evidence preparation.

(1) proximity to the community it serves;

(2) whether the site is demonstrably special to the local community; and

(3) whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

4.5 The assessment was informed by site visits, photographic evidence, mapping analysis, and available background information. The “demonstrably special” criterion was evaluated with reference to factors such as recreational value, visual amenity, tranquillity, historic significance, biodiversity value, and community use, drawing where appropriate on consultation feedback and local evidence.

4.6 The assessment adopts a qualitative, proportionate approach, recognising that the NPPF does not set prescriptive thresholds or scoring systems for Local Green Space designation. Professional planning judgement has been applied to each site, with reasons clearly recorded to explain whether the NPPF criteria are met. Any sites that do not meet one or more of the criteria, or which are considered to be extensive tracts

of land or more appropriately protected through other planning policies, will not be recommended for designation.

5. Assessment

Land at North Hall

5.1 This site is located immediately adjacent to the North Hall at the northern edge of Loxwood. North Hall has served as the village hall for the parish and played a central role in village life since it was established in 1937. It comprises a main hall, a meeting room / activity space and a kitchen, and a car park. It supports a wide range of regular groups and activities, reflecting its role as a community hub. These include fitness and wellbeing classes, sports activities, social clubs, arts, and children's and family groups, film nights and other social events. The hall is also available for private functions such as weddings, meetings, fundraisers, and celebratory events. In addition the hall is the meeting place for the Parish Council and holds physical copies of Junior Parish documents.

5.2 The hall is surrounded by approximately two acres of open space and woodland (including a community orchard) which provides a green setting and complements North Hall's role as a focal point for the local community. It is used for the annual village fete, community amenity space and activities making it an important local facility. It also used for rallies, camping and caravanning. Through the autumn, winter and spring, Junior football groups regularly use the grounds on Saturday mornings.

Land at North Hall	
(1) proximity to the community it serves	North Hall is located on the northern edge of the village. It is well-integrated with the village and in close proximity to the community it serves.
(2) whether the site is demonstrably special to the local community.	This site is closely linked to North Halll which, as explained above, is a focal point for the local community. The open space provides for a wide range of informal recreation and community events. It supports both formal and informal uses, contributing significantly to the social, recreational, and cultural life of Loxwood. It is highly valued by local residents, as identified through local consultation. The open space also has biodiversity value with areas of woodland, including a community orchard, a

	wildflower meadow. In recent years, community groups have been active in enhancing these parts of the open space.
(3) whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.	The site comprises 2 acres (0.8 hectares) of open space. The entirety of the site has an important community use, as explained above. It is not an extensive tract of land.
Recommendation	This site satisfies the criteria set out in the NPPF and should be retained as a Local Green Space.

Jubilee Gardens

5.4 Jubilee Gardens is a small but valued open green space located on Station Road, Loxwood. It previously formed part of the Willets Way development site but was purchased by the Parish Council. It is now managed by the Loxwood Community Gardens Initiative, a local volunteer group that works to maintain and enhance green spaces for community benefit.

5.5 The garden comprises a well-tended area of public open space featuring planting, seating, and informal landscaping. Five of the trees on the site are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO). It also provides recreation and play space with a number of staggered parallel bars of varying heights on which residents can exercise upon. While modest in size, Jubilee Gardens provides an accessible and tranquil setting close to residential areas, providing recreation and meeting space.

Jubilee Gardens	
(1) proximity to the community it serves	Jubilee Gardens is located centrally within the village and so is in close proximity to the community it serves.
(2) whether the site is demonstrably special to the local community.	The space is demonstrably special to the local community for its contribution to local character, visual amenity, recreation space and tranquillity. Although modest in size, Jubilee Gardens provides an attractive and well-maintained green space within the village, offering opportunities for quiet informal recreation, rest, and social interaction. Its landscaped

	planting, seating, and village-centre location mean it is frequently used by residents and contributes positively to the local environment, village identity and sense of place. The site's management by local volunteers is further evidence of its community value and local importance. It is highly valued by local residents, as identified through local consultation. It also makes an important contribution to local biodiversity through the five protected trees and native species of planting which provide nesting opportunities and habitat for birds and wildlife, which is a further reason for its local importance.
(3) whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.	The site is modest in size (0.07 ha). It is not an extensive tract of land.
Recommendation	This site satisfies the criteria set out in the NPPF and should be retained as a Local Green Space.

Loxwood Sports Association

5.6 Loxwood Sports Association is located off Plaistow Road, to the south of the village. The site comprises a cricket pitch which is the home to Loxwood Cricket Club and a floodlit football pitch with a 100 seat stand that is the home of Loxwood Football Club. There is also a clubhouse that has a bar, changing rooms, squash court, snooker and pool tables and a darts board. The site also hosts various sporting and local events taking place throughout the year.

5.7 The northern part of the site (cricket pitch) is owned by Loxwood Parish Council with the southern part of the site (football pitches) owned by Loxwood Sports Association.

Loxwood Sports Association	
(1) proximity to the community it serves	The site is located 1km to the south of the village. It is easily accessible to local residents on foot, bicycle or private transportation.

(2) whether the site is demonstrably special to the local community.	Loxwood Sports Association is a key sporting and recreational facility serving the village and surrounding rural community. It is a central part of village life and provides a range of outdoor sports and leisure amenities for all age groups that contribute to community wellbeing, physical activity, and social interaction and cohesion. In addition to formal sport, the site is used for informal recreation and community events. It is highly valued by local residents, as identified through local consultation.
(3) whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.	The site is moderate in size (approximately 4.7 ha) but is defined by the extent of sports pitches, clubhouse and parking area. It is not an extensive tract of land.
Recommendation	This site satisfies the criteria set out in the NPPF and should be retained as a Local Green Space.

Land at Nursery Green

5.8 Nursery Green is a pocket of public open space located within the heart of Loxwood. It formed part of the Nursery Green development site which was allocated through the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan for housing, retail development and a village green. The green is characterised by an open grassed area, newly planted trees, and informal landscaping that contributes to the openness and rural character of the village. It is owned and maintained by Loxwood Green residents.

Land at Nursery Green	
(1) proximity to the community it serves	Nursery Green is located within the heart of the village and is in close proximity to the community it serves, providing direct and easy access on foot.

(2) whether the site is demonstrably special to the local community.	The green is demonstrably special to the local community for its accessibility and amenity and visual value. It provides an attractive open setting to the new development at Nursery Green and contributes positively to the village streetscape, being located on the main route through the village. It provides valued space for informal recreation and social interaction. It also makes an important contribution to local biodiversity through newly planted trees and native species of planting which provide nesting opportunities and habitat for birds and wildlife, which is a further reason for its local importance.
(3) whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.	The site is modest in size (0.2 hectares / 0.5 acres). It is not an extensive tract of land.
Recommendation	This site satisfies the criteria set out in the NPPF and should be designated as a Local Green Space.

6. Summary and conclusions

6.1 This Local Green Space assessment has considered a number of green spaces within the neighbourhood area against the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. It assesses the existing Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Spaces and new sites that are under consideration. The assessment has applied a consistent and proportionate methodology, drawing on site visits, mapping, and local evidence to evaluate whether each space meets the required tests of proximity to the community, demonstrable local significance, and whether the site is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

6.2 All of the sites have been found to play an important role in supporting the character, environmental quality, and wellbeing of the village. They provide opportunities for recreation and social interaction and make an important contribution to the visual amenity and local distinctiveness of the village. Their close relationship to the built environment means they are regularly experienced and valued by the local community.

6.3 This report finds that all of the sites satisfy the NPPF criteria and recommends that they are designated as Local Green Spaces through the Neighbourhood Plan Review. Their designation through the Neighbourhood Plan will help to ensure that locally important green spaces are protected for the benefit of the community, while remaining aligned with the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Appendix 1 – Map showing Local Green Spaces of adopted Neighbourhood Plan

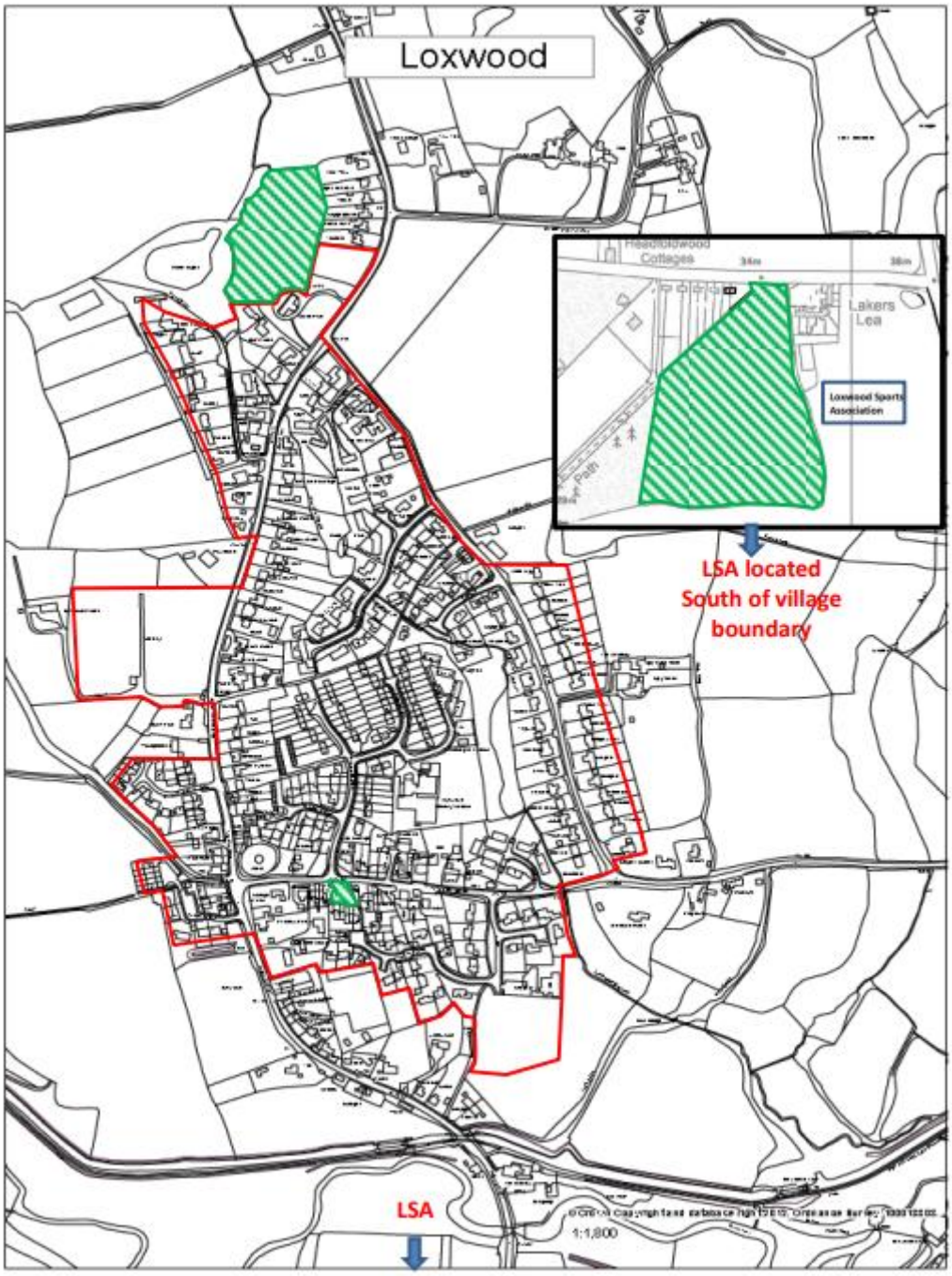

Figure 7
Local Green Spaces