

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan: Local Green Space designation justification

The draft Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan identifies five areas of land as locally valued green space to be designated as Local Green Space:

“Policy ENV3: Local Green Space

Our locally valued green spaces (green infrastructure) are identified on map X and are designated as Local Green Space. These Local Green Spaces (and the reason(s) for their designation) are:

- a) Severn Road Park Estate Green (used for recreation and community events)**
- b) Midland Road Park Estate Green (used for recreation and community events)**
- c) Boakes Drive Green (used for recreation and community events and noted for important wildlife)**
- d) Verney Fields (part of) (local significance due to beauty, historic landscape features, tranquillity, wildlife; a rural, recreational amenity close to town centre)**
- e) Court View Ponds (important wildlife)**

These areas will be protected for the reasons and uses set out. Development proposals on or likely to impact on the sites will only be supported where they:

- i) maintain or enhance the existing use and amenity value of the site;**
- ii) enhance the access to and use of the site where used for recreational purposes; and,**
- iii) have no adverse impact on the landscape, habitats or biodiversity of the site or (where unavoidable) satisfactorily mitigate such impact.”**

The government’s Planning Practice Guidance outlines the purpose of the designation:

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

The purpose and criteria for designation are given in paragraphs 76 and 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

“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.”ⁱⁱ

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.”ⁱⁱⁱ**

Verney Fields (part of):

Justification for designation as Local Green Space

Verney Fields is an attractive area within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) easily accessed from Stonehouse by a number of footpaths. It is the main route from the town to Doverow Hill and Wood, a local landmark and beauty spot of great interest for its wildlife and geological features and history as a quarry. Doverow Wood is publicly owned by a Trust and Verney Fields provide the main access to them. Verney Fields is well used for recreation by local people offering beautiful views and rural tranquillity close to the centre of a busy town. Further details regarding the proposal to designate Verney Fields are given in the *Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space Checklist Verney Fields, April 2016* and accompanying documents.

- **Proximity and location:** Verney Fields is less than a kilometre away from Stonehouse town. It is both close to town and close to a local landmark, Doverow Hill and Wood, within the Cotswold AONB.
- **Special to the local community, beauty, recreational value:** It is valued by local people for its views, beauty and rural character and for its recreational value as somewhere to walk and exercise. Local support for keeping access to Verney Fields has been demonstrated by a Stonehouse Town Council survey of January 2016 and letters of support from residents as well as Neighbourhood Plan consultation results.
- **Landscape character and beauty:** The quality of the landscape is recognised by its designation as part of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also recognised within the Stonehouse Design Statement-Supplementary Planning Advice (2005) and Stonehouse Town Character Assessment (2016).
- **Wildlife:** The area is rich in wildlife and is part of the Doverow Hill Key Wildlife Site and includes a priority habitat, deciduous woodland.
- **Historic significance:** The area has historic significance for its connection to part of Stonehouse's industrial heritage being close to the site of the former Stonehouse Brick and Tile company who quarried extensively in Doverow Hill. In addition, this quarrying has revealed the area to be of geological importance exposing lower Jurassic, Lower Lias and Middle Lias rock beds.

Evidence

Evidence is summarised in *Stonehouse NP Local Green Space Checklist Verney Fields April 2016* and the following supporting documents:

1. Verney Fields Map SDC
- 2a Verney Fields (photo)
- 2b View West from Doverow Hill
3. Map with footpaths around Verney Fields
4. Stonehouse Town Council letter of support LGS Verney Fields
5. Stonehouse Town Council survey Access to Doverow Wood Jan 2016
6. Letters of support re access to Doverow Wood February 2016
7. Extract from Stonehouse Town Council Regeneration and Environment Committee Mins 22 Feb 2016
8. Map Stonehouse NP Environment 2 Oct 2015
- 9a GWT Map Natural habitat areas and open space - numbered - Stonehouse - v1.0 draft
- 9b GWT Natural habitat areas and open space list - Stonehouse - v1.0 draft

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

ⁱⁱ http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph_76

ⁱⁱⁱ http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph_77