



Document Reference
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East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policy LP29 – Conserving Local Green Spaces

November 2017

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council is reviewing its Local Plan, which was last adopted in April 2015. The new Local Plan, which is hoped to be adopted in 2018, will provide a framework for development in the district until 2036 and beyond.
- 1.2 This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy LP29 (of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, November 2017), which relates to conserving local green spaces.

National policy

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance.
- 1.4 Section 8 of the NPPF concerns "promoting healthy communities" and there is a separate section on "Plan-making". The following points are particularly relevant:
 - Paragraph 73- Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.
 - Paragraph 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.
 - Paragraph 77- The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces. 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, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
 - Where the green area concerned is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
 - Paragraph 78- Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with Policy for Green Belts.
- 1.5 The above NPPF policy and NPPG guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP29 in particular.

2 East Cambridgeshire Context in Relation to Policy LP29

- 2.1 Open spaces make a significant contribution to local communities and the environment within East Cambridgeshire. Accessible, good quality open spaces provide opportunities for physical exercise and places to meet, impacting positively on health and wellbeing and social cohesion. These spaces also have environmental benefits, including supporting

biodiversity, flood risk management and contributing to landscape and townscape character and the setting of the built environment.

- 2.2 Although a rural area, access to the countryside within East Cambridgeshire can be more restricted than other rural areas as a result of the intensive agriculture that is common throughout the fenland areas. Therefore the identification and protection of areas of Local Green Space is important to ensure residents have access to good quality open spaces.

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) contained a policy entitled Conserving Local Green Spaces. The supporting text for this Policy also asked for suggested Local Green Space (LGS) sites to be put forward for consideration by the Council. Whilst a large number of suggested LGSs were put forward to us, only a very limited number of representations were made on the policy wording itself, totalling 3 expressions of support for the policy.
- 3.2 It was not been necessary to make any changes to the policy in response to comments received. However, the supporting text prior to the policy was factually updated, to reflect the stage the plan had now reached.
- 3.3 A separate report was published at the Further Draft stage, available in our evidence library website, with details of why suggested LGS sites were proposed to be either taken forward or rejected.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The Further Draft was published for consultation in January-February 2017.
- 4.2 A limited number of comments were received during the Further Draft consultation. In summary, the key issues raised were:
- Some comments stating the evidence behind the policy is lacking/weak, particularly in relation to the site appraisal process;
 - Various comments relating to specific sites set out in the Local Green Space evidence report;
 - Suggestions of additional sites for consideration;
 - Objection to LGS having Green Belt status
- 4.3 Whilst the comments have been carefully considered, it has not been considered necessary to make any further amendments to the policy for the Proposed Submission version. The Council is confident that the appraisal process is sound and in compliance with the NPPF. Reference to Green Belt in the policy simply reflects the policy for LGS in the NPPF.
- 4.4 Separately, the Local Green Space Evidence Report has been updated to include suggested new LGS sites and take into account comments made during the consultation on the Further Draft Local Plan.

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy. (Option 1 is the preferred policy approach which has been included in the Proposed Submission.)

- 5.2 **Option 2:** No policy, and rely on national policy for this subject area. This option has been rejected as national policy, whilst setting out criteria for the designation of Local Green Spaces, does not in itself identify Local Green Spaces, this is for Local / Neighbourhood Plan-making processes. Without a Policy, the Local Plan would not be able to identify such sites on the Policies Map.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the policy as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (November 2017). It is hoped this helps demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during the consultation stages, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.