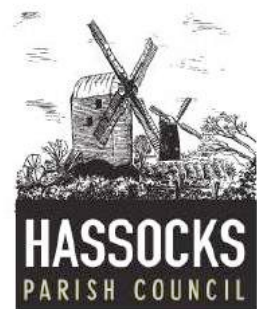


Revised Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan

Local Green Space Policy Review



October 2018



Introduction

This report has been prepared in support of the proposed allocation of eight sites as Local Green Spaces (LGS) as part of the revised Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan (HNP). Local Green Spaces can be designated as part of the Neighbourhood Plan provided they meet criteria described in Paragraph 100 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which are set out below:

- *‘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.’*

This paper has been prepared in support of the revised Neighbourhood Plan in order to provide the evidence base for sites designated as LGS in the revised HNP. Seven of the sites considered in this report were proposed as LGS as part of the Regulation 16 HNP dated June 2016. This paper re-considers whether all or part of the original seven sites still meet the NPPF criteria, and also considers a further site (LGS 8 Land at Clayton Mills).

The concluding section provides a “traffic light” assessment of each site with reference to the above NPPF criteria. The conclusions and recommendations to this paper re-assess the LGS Policy within the Regulation 16 HNP and sets out the proposed policy for inclusion in the revised HNP.

All documents have been prepared by David Withycombe (BSc, MSc, CMLI) and Virginia Pullen (BSc, MA, CMLI) as co-opted members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. This paper should be read in association with the following documents which formed part of the evidence base to the 2016 HNP:

- Hassocks Parish Landscape Character Assessment
- Hassocks Parish Strategic Views
- Hassocks Parish Cultural Heritage
- Hassocks Parish Townscape Assessment
- Hassocks Parish Wildlife Asset Identification

The locations of the proposed LGS sites are shown on Figure 1. Figure 1 also shows the proposed locations for Enhanced Footpaths.

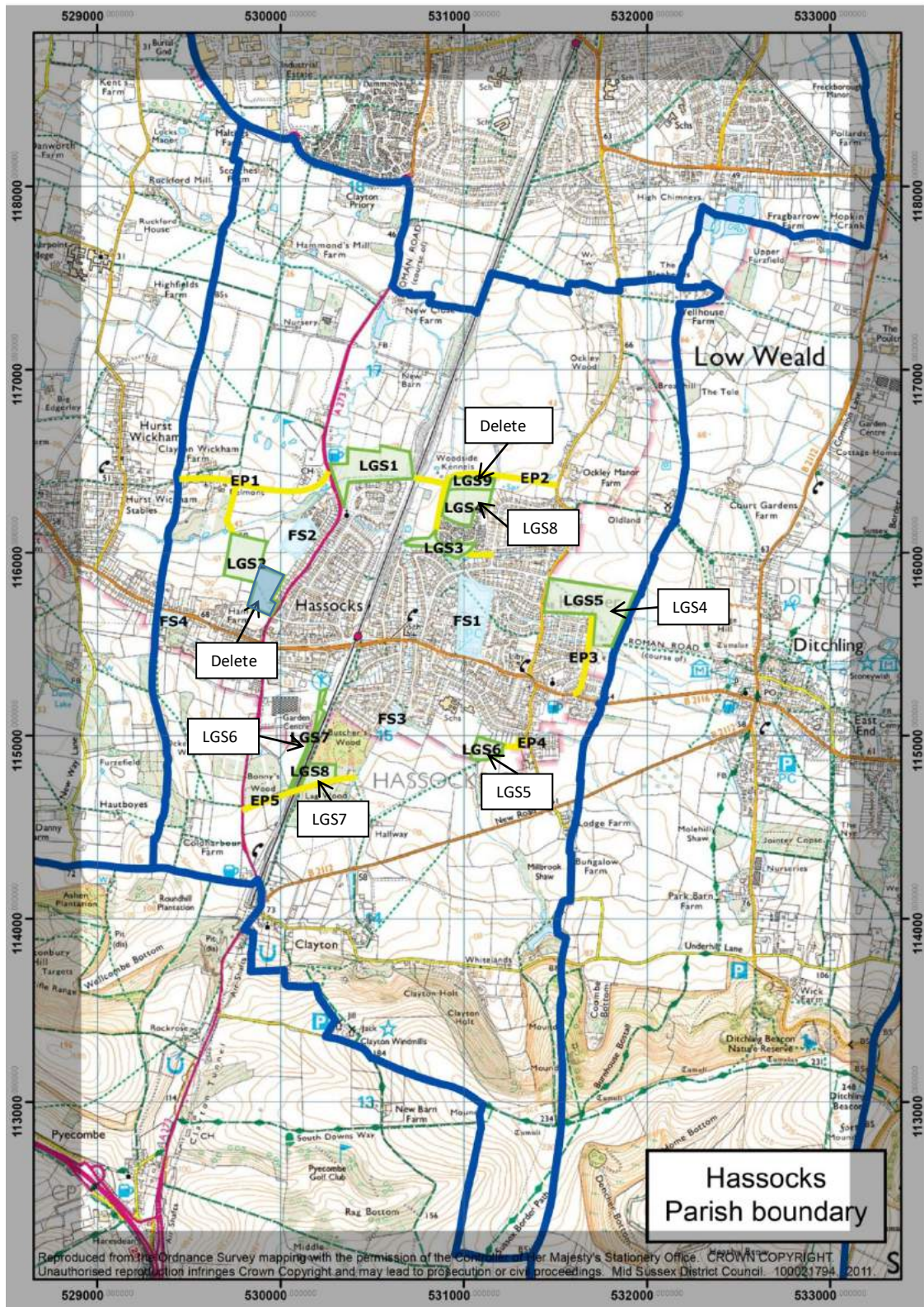


Figure 1: Proposed Local Green Spaces and Enhanced Footpaths – This is the plan from the original paper which assessed 9 LGS, so numbering won't correspond. Proposals map which shows LGS1 to LGS7 does not include enhanced paths and PS 1 to 3 – add revised proposals map.

Individual Site Descriptions and Local Significance

LGS1: Land to the north of Shepherd's Walk

Site and Location

This is an area comprising two fields to the north of Shepherds Walk and an adjoining area of public open space to the west of Shepherds Walk. The open space is an informal area adjacent to the Herring Stream. Local residents put forward a written case for designation of the fields as a LGS in 2014.



Public Access

A public footpath crosses the area from west to east and the fields have been used by local residents as informal access for many years. It is recognised that apart from the public right of way across the area the current open access is at the discretion of the landowner.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies on the northern edge of Hassocks and adjoins an area of housing to the south. There is access to the land via a footpath. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises two medium sized fields linked by a public right of way. The site is enclosed by a hedgerow to the north, the railway to the east, housing to the south and London Road to the west, creating a defined landscape parcel. It is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

There are views across the area from the public footpath and from the adjacent houses. The area has an unspoilt rural character. The winding channel of the Herring Stream forms the western boundary of the area. The fast flowing Herring is in a deep channel and is a focal point of the area. Mature trees along the stream channel, willows and alders, enhance the visual and landscape value of the stream.

Heritage significance

The mature trees and hedgerows which define the field boundaries in this area suggest this is a historic landscape.

Wildlife significance

The ancient hedges and mature oak trees are a potential habitat for a diverse range of species. The woodland on the railway embankment and the Herring Stream which form the boundaries to the area are also rich in wildlife. The wet meadows in the flood plain of the stream are a valued habitat.

Recreational value

The area is used by local people for informal recreation and is highly valued for its rural character and tranquillity. The public footpath is part of a longer distance route between Ditchling and Hurstpierpoint and is part of a circular route around the village.

LGS2: Land at The Ham

Site and Location

This field lies to the west of London Road and forms part of Ham Farm. The proposed LGS lies to the west of land recently granted permission for residential development at Ham Fields. The proposed area of LGS 2 has been reduced from that shown in the 2016 Regulation 16 HNP to reflect this change.



Public Access

The field is crossed by a public footpath and is used for informal access by local people. This right of way gives access to the golf course and the circular path around the village. It is recognised that apart from the public right of way across the area the current open access is at the discretion of the landowner.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies to the west of existing and proposed residential areas on London Road, on the western edge of the village. The site also partially adjoins Belmont Recreation Ground and the golf course to the north and is overlooked by properties to the south. There is direct access from the residential areas on London Road via a footpath. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a single medium sized field. The site is enclosed by the planned residential development on Ham Fields/London Road to the east, the golf course and Belmont Recreation Ground to the north and existing fields to the west and south. The site benefits from a relatively enclosed character and it is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

There are views across the area from the public footpath and from the adjacent houses on London Road. The area has an unspoilt rural pastoral character with mature trees and hedgerows. There is a key viewpoint from the edge of the Hurst Wickham ridge which affords views south across the area and beyond to the downs.

Heritage significance

The area has rich archaeological potential with evidence of prehistoric, Bronze Age and Roman remains. There is a possible Roman cemetery and a Romano-British Settlement at Ham Farm.

Wildlife significance

There is wildlife value in the mature hedgerows, grazing land, hedgerows and mature trees. Barn owls are often seen hunting the fields in this area.

Recreational value

The area is used by local people for informal recreation and is highly valued for its rural character and tranquillity. The public footpath links to a circular route which runs around the village.

LGS3: Land to the south of Clayton Mills

Site and Location

This linear site links Grand Avenue with Woodland Road and lies to the south of the Clayton Mills estate. Part of the area south of Clayton Mills is a public open space and the other half was set aside for a health centre.



Public Access

The area is accessed by the public footpath which follows a stream running west to east. Part of the area is public open space associated with the Clayton Mills development and the rest is woodland separated from the footpath by the stream. This is an important footpath link within the village between Clayton Mills to Adastra Park.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The site is enclosed by residential development to the north and south and forms an important green corridor adjoining the stream. A public footpath runs alongside the stream. The site is, therefore, considered to be in close proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a single, enclosed small field bordering a stream. The site is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

The area is an important green infrastructure corridor in the centre of the village. The mature trees and streamside footpath are an attractive recreational link through the northern residential part of the village. There are limited views from the area as it is enclosed by trees.

Heritage significance

This corridor is part of an historic footpath link following the stream through the village from Ockley Lane via Adastra Park to Woodland Road. This also links to the circular route around the village.

Wildlife significance

The stream and associated mature trees are a valuable wildlife corridor. The land originally set aside for the health centre has become overgrown and has wildlife potential.

Recreational value

This area is of high recreational value as a green corridor with associated footpath and open spaces.

LGS4: Land to the east of Ockley Lane

Site and Location

This site comprises two medium sized agricultural fields which lie to the east of Ockley Lane. Both fields are in private ownership.



Public Access

The fields are crossed by a public footpath which is well used as the route from Hassocks to Ditchling. The western field has been ploughed in recent years, but there remains a well-used informal path around the perimeter of the field, popular with local dog walkers in particular. The eastern field remains under pasture. It is recognised that apart from the public right of way across the area the open access is at the discretion of the landowner.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies on the north eastern edge of the village with existing residential areas to the south and west. Three paths provide direct links to the neighbouring residential areas. This site is considered of particular importance to the setting of the village in views from the higher land in the vicinity of Oldlands Mill and Lodge Hill. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises two medium sized fields which are linked both physically by a footpath and visually with views across the land from the north west. The site is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are open views across the site from Ockley Lane towards Oldland's windmill and the greensand ridge and Lodge Hill in Ditchling and the South Downs to the south.

Heritage significance

The footpath corridor would have been an historic route between the villages. The distinct field boundaries and ancient trees would suggest this is a historic landscape and would have archaeological potential. The Roman road which ran west to east through the village is thought to have run just to the south of this area.

Wildlife significance

Mature ash and oak trees are a feature on the field boundaries along with one fine hornbeam and the associated hedgerows provide wildlife corridors and potential roosts and navigational corridors for bats. The eastern most field is bordered by streams and a mature hedge to the east and south. The southern boundary of the eastern field adjoins an SSSI or Local Wildlife Site.

Recreational value

The well-used footpath crossing the area is valued for views to the wider countryside and as part of the circular route around the village.

LGS5: Land at South of Downlands

Site and Location

This field is part of the Downlands school estate (Downlands Community Field) which is not in regular use as a playing field but is used for occasional sports events by the school. The school have allowed the Hassocks Amenity Association to use this field as the Community Field.



Public Access

The site has open access and is crossed by a public footpath.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies on the southern fringes of the village and is bordered by the rear gardens to properties on Dale Avenue to the north. A public footpath provides direct access to the land from Lodge Lane to the west. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a single medium sized field enclosed by woodland and hedges and a stream. It is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are wide open views to the scarp slope of the downs from Ditchling Beacon to Wolstonbury Hill from this area.

Heritage significance

The heritage value of this area is largely unknown as there is a lack of investigative evidence. The field has never been ploughed and could therefore have archaeological potential.

Wildlife significance

The mature hedgerows on the north and south boundaries are of wildlife value. The western boundary a section of ancient woodland and a chalk stream which also have high wildlife value.

Recreational value

The area has high recreational value as a green field with open access and is used as a community field. The public footpath is part of a popular circular route around the southern edge of the village and is well used as it gives access to the Downs and to Lag and Butchers Woods.

LGS 6: Land to the west of the railway line

Site and Location

This is a strip of land to the west of the railway which links the village centre at Keymer Road to the public footpath at Misty Bridge.



Public Access

There is informal pedestrian access through this corridor.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Landscape character and views

The corridor runs through the built up area to emerge near the garden centre into a wooded corridor and an open field. There are views to the Downs to the south.

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies on the southern edge of the village and forms a narrow green corridor adjacent to the railway line. The site forms an important potential link from the residential areas to the north to the footpath network and wider countryside to the south. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a narrow wooded corridor. It is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Heritage significance

The railway corridor and Misty Bridge are of local heritage significance.

Wildlife significance

The woodland adjacent to the railway is semi natural ancient woodland and the field to the south is unimproved meadow.

Recreational value

This corridor could provide a much needed cycle and footpath link from the west side of the village and station to the Downs. This has been a long term aspiration for the community.

LGS 7: Land at Pheasant Field

Site and Location

This field sits between the woodlands of Butchers Wood and Lag Wood which are both areas of semi- natural ancient woodland. The current owners also own Lag Wood and are managing the area for their own pleasure as a natural area and wildlife asset.



Public Access

It is recognised that apart from the public right of way across the area the current open access is at the discretion of the landowner.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land lies on the southern fringes of the village and is bordered by the Butchers Wood to the north and Lag Wood to the south, but less than 0.5 kms from the nearest residential area to the north. The site is a popular area for local dog walkers, with access from the residential areas to the north via a footpath known locally as the 'cinder track'. It is also located on a well-used circular walk around the southern edge of the village. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a single medium sized field enclosed by woodland and the railway line. It is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

The site is of high landscape value as it is within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. There are views across the area to the surrounding woodland and longer views to the downs. The area is tranquil as it is remote from the village roads and activity. The field has an unspoilt character as unimproved pasture surrounded by mature woodland.

Heritage significance

The heritage value of this area is largely unknown as there is a lack of investigative evidence. As an unspoilt and intact area of landscape with historic meadow and woodland it has high heritage value.

Wildlife significance

The unimproved meadow is a designated local wildlife site (SNCI) the value of which is further enhanced by proximity to ancient woodland.

Recreational value

The area is highly valued by local people as an unspoilt, tranquil and accessible open space which is accessed by several public rights of way and from the Woodland Trust owned Butchers Wood.

LGS8: Land at Clayton Mills

Site and Location

This is an area of land which was part of landscape planning condition to be open space to serve the recent development at Clayton Mills. This has never been fully implemented.



Public Access

The site has open access and a public footpath crosses the area from south to north and joins the east west footpath on the northern boundary.

Criteria for designation as LGS

Reasonable Proximity to a local Community

The land is bordered to the south and east by existing residential development, with public access via an existing footpath providing direct access to the land from the residential areas to the south. It is, therefore, considered to be in reasonable proximity to a local community.

An Extensive Tract of Land

The site comprises a single medium sized field on the edge of residential development. It is, therefore, not considered to be an extensive tract of land.

Landscape character and views

There are views for the area to the open countryside to the north and equally there are views back across to this area from the ridge of Burgess Hill. The character of the area has been changed by the development of Clayton Mills and so does not strongly reflect wider rural character.

Heritage significance

An archaeological notification area covers the northern section of the area where possible Bronze Age and Roman remains have been found.

Wildlife significance

There is a spring rising in land north of Mackie Avenue creating a wetland and continuing across the footpath as a stream. The hedgerow on the northern boundary has wildlife value as do the mature Horse chestnut trees at Woodside Grange. There is mature mixed woodland along railway line which supports mature oak trees.

Recreational value

There is existing open access to this site and the land is subject to low key management by the Clayton Mills Management Company which is run by and on behalf of residents of the estate. The existing large bunds are a deterrent to less able users of the site. The well-used footpaths crossing the area are valued for views to the wider countryside and as part of the circular route around the village.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Traffic Light Assessment below provides an overview of whether each site fully, partially or does not meet, the NPPF criteria for designation of an LGS.

“Traffic Light” Assessment for each site

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Traffic Light | LGS Assessment Criteria |
| | Meets assessment criteria |
| | Partially meets assessment criteria |
| | Does not meet assessment criteria |

| LGS No. | Proximity to community | Special to local community | Local Significance | Local in character |
|---------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| LGS1 | | | | |
| LGS2 | | | | |
| LGS3 | | | | |
| LGS4 | | | | |
| LGS5 | | | | |
| LGS6 | | | | |
| LGS7 | | | | |
| LGS8 | | | | |

Four of the sites (LGS1, LGS2, LGS4 and LGS 7) are assessed as fully meeting all of the NPPF criteria.

All of the sites are considered to meet the NPPF criteria of being “in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves” and not “extensive tracts of land”.

Of the remaining sites these are assessed as fully meeting three of the four criteria and partially meeting one of the four criteria.

As all of the sites are assessed as wholly or predominantly meeting the NPPF criteria, this report concludes that all sites should be taken forward as LGS sites under a revised policy for inclusion in the 2018 revised HNP.

The proposed revised policy wording is set out below:

Policy ...: Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Spaces (as shown on the Proposals Map);

- Land to the north of Shepherds Walk (LGS1)
- Land at the Ham (LGS2)
- Land to the south of Clayton Mills (LGS3)
- Land to the east of Ockley Lane (LGS4)
- Land at south of Downlands (LGS5)
- Land to the west of the railway line (LGS6)
- Land at Pheasant field (LGS7)
- Land at Clayton Mills (LGS 8)