

Ninfield Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022- 2039 Local Green Spaces Report January 2023



Contents

Introduction.....	3
What does Local Green Space Designation mean?	4
NPPF and Local Green Spaces	4
Ninfield Local Green Spaces Identification - Methodology	5
Stage 1: Taking Stock:.....	5
Stage 2: Asking residents.....	5
Table 1: Valued Local Green Spaces in Ninfield Parish	6
Stage 3: Full evaluation:	7
Local Green Space Criteria.....	7
Table 2: Green Spaces ruled out after application of NPPF Criteria. Ref Green Space Reason for exclusion	8
Table 3: List of Potential Local Green Spaces Going Forward	10
Map showing 7 sites to be designated as LGS.....	11
Table 4: All 11 sites as assessed for Local Green Spaces designation unless stated otherwise (<i>PC – Parish Council</i> <i>WDC – Wealden District Council</i>).....	12
Assessment Results.....	13
LG1 – Recreation Ground, Church Lane	13
LG2 – The Stocks & Whipping Post	18
LG3 – Church Wood with adjacent valley slopes including Church Fields & Church Path	20
LG4- The Allotments, Church Lane	27
LG5 – The Churchyard, Church Lane	29
LG6(a) – Combe Lane Verges & Manchester Road Verges	33
LG6(b) – Standard Hill Verges.....	38
LG6(c) – Bexhill Road Verges, (Molly’s Corner), Bexhill Road.....	42
LG7 – (Future Recreation area behind Manchester Road)	46

Introduction

Ninfield Parish is for the most part, positioned on a prominent ridge overlooking the High Weald AONB and the Pevensy Levels. A large proportion of the area is productive farmland and agriculture is still prominent in the local economy. There are significant areas of ancient woodlands embedded in the countryside in most directions. We enjoy a high-quality natural environment with key characteristics including Church Wood, Combe Wood and the fields off Church Path with their stunning views to the South Downs and the sea.

Areas within the built village were once meadows previously grazed for dairying or sheep farming and this has left a legacy of diverse flora with many green spaces and verges remaining rich in wildflower species.

The local fauna is also diverse with a wide range of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Green spaces are vital as green corridors for the maintenance, support and movement of our wildlife.

Within our Parish there are a number of open green spaces that we value and wish to enhance and protect for future generations. These spaces give our Parish a beautiful green and rural character which is highly valued by residents and visitors alike.

Wealden Open Space Assessment Report 2022

This Study is relevant to the designation of Local Green Spaces. It has comprehensively assessed open space provision throughout Wealden District. Among its conclusions in respect of Ninfield parish is that it lacks any '*natural and semi-natural greenspace*' or any '*amenity greenspace*', the nearest being at Hooe Common. Based on the current population, it calculates that there is a shortfall of 10.91ha of the former type and 0.56ha of the latter. As regards other types of open space, it concludes that the existing provisions in Ninfield (the recreation ground including its facilities for children and young people, the allotments and the church cemetery) are sufficient in terms of size for the present population but fall short of being good quality. The report states that there is a basic principle that new housing developments should include provision for the additional recreational needs they would generate, the main mechanisms being through legal agreement with the owners/developers or CIL.

What does Local Green Space Designation mean?

NPPF and Local Green Spaces

The Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) paragraphs 101-103 states “The designation of land as a local green space (LGS) through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community that it serves;
- 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
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) “Open space, sports and recreational facilities, public rights of way and local green space” on the gov.uk website provides more detail regarding LGS designation (Ref ID: 37-005-022-20140306). It makes it clear that LGS must not be used in a way that undermines the requirement for plans to identify sufficient land to meet identified development needs. Where the land is already protected by some other designation such as an AONB, it states that consideration should be given as to whether any additional local benefit would be gained. “Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis. Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a “back door” way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.” “Some areas that may be considered for designation as LGS may already have largely unrestricted public access...However, other land could be considered even if there is no public access (e.g. green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty). Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what already exists at present. Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with landowners, whose legal rights must be respected”. LGS may be crossed by existing public rights of way but there is no need to designate linear corridors simply to preserve those rights. A LGS does not need to be in public ownership but landowners should be contacted at an early stage about proposals for designation of their land so that they have the opportunity to make representations in respect of a draft plan. “Designating a green area as LGS would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners.” “Permitted development rights” are not affected. Management will remain the responsibility of the landowner. “If the features that make the green area special and locally significant are to be conserved, how it will be managed in the future is likely to be an important consideration. Local communities can consider how, with the landowner’s agreement, they might be able to get involved, perhaps in partnership with interested organisations that can provide

advice or resources. Land designated as LGS may potentially be nominated for listing as an Asset of Community Value. Listing gives community interest groups an opportunity to bid if the owner wants to dispose of the land.

Ninfield Local Green Spaces Identification - Methodology

Stage 1: Taking Stock:

Five Local Green Spaces were identified through consultations activities and work carried out by the Character Assessment group and the Green Space Working Group in association with the Village Society. These sites are:

1. The Recreation Ground (including Ridel Gardens and The Stocks)
2. Church Wood
3. Church Path & Fields
4. Combe Wood
5. Reservoir

Stage 2: Asking residents

The Parish Questionnaire asked local residents what green spaces they valued for tranquillity, beauty, historic significance and wildlife. This exercise provided a further 23 named areas. See Table 1.

The Working Group checked to make sure none of the sites have been allocated for any other purpose or usage in the Wealden District 2013 Core Strategy Local Plan or in its emerging Local Plan.

The Working Group also checked that the land or site in question have not already been granted any planning permissions for development

The Working Group notified landowners of the possibility of using the neighbourhood plan to designate their sites as Local Green Spaces.

Table 1: Valued Local Green Spaces in Ninfield Parish

Ref	Green spaces identified by residents	Number
GS1	Church Wood	125
GS2	Land behind High Street/Church Fields/Church Path	79
GS3	The Recreation Ground	73
GS4	Manchester Road Verges	1
GS5	Combe Woods	31
GS6	All surrounding Countryside	33
GS7	20 Acre Field (Crouch Field)	13
GS8	Bowling Green / Bowls Club	1
GS9	Stocks & Whipping Post triangle	1
GS10	Moons Hill, Marlpits lane and Combe Lane	73
GS11	Fields off Moor Hall Drive	12
GS12	Circular Walk via Transformer	11
GS13	Fields behind Manchester Road	10
GS14	AONB/SSSI	2
GS15	The Allotments	6
GS16	The Churchyard	5
GS17	End of Church Lane	5
GS18	Normanhurst Estate	3
GS19	Ashburnham Estate	3
GS20	Potmans Lane	3
GS21	Gladwish Land/Adjacent to Catsfield	3
GS22	Hooe Road	2
GS23	Standard Hill Verges (west)	1
GS24	Standard Hill Verges (east)	1
GS25	Land between Ninfield and Ashburnham	1
GS26	Reservoir	0
GS27	Coombe Lane Verges	1
GS28	Bexhill Road verges (including Molly's Corner)	1
GS29	Green buffer zone between Manchester Road and the new development	8

Stage 3: Full evaluation:

Each site was evaluated according to the LGS Criteria in the recently amended NPPF. See Table 2.

Local Green Space Criteria

- 1) **Reasonably close proximity to community:** (The land must not be isolated from the community and would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.) *There is no clarification of what constitutes reasonably close. If the key measure to designate the site is its closeness to the community, in applying the NPPF criteria, close proximity would normally mean an easy walking distance and based on Natural England standards that would mean 1.25 miles or less. Using Natural England Accessible natural Greenspace Standard ANGSt¹, recommends that "everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace: of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minute walk) from home, or at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometre of home"*¹
- 2) **Demonstrably special to a local community:** We used the results of Question 41 of the Parish Survey to guide this process i.e. "Are there specific areas of land (public or private) that you especially value as Local Green Space for their intrinsic beauty, tranquillity, views, wildlife, historic significance or recreational benefit?"
 - a. **Beauty:** This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to landscape, character and or setting of the settlement. LGS would need to contribute to local identity, character of the area and a sense of place, and make an important contribution to the physical form and layout of the settlement. It may link up with other open spaces and allow views through or beyond the settlement which are valued locally.
 - b. **Historic significance:** The land should provide a setting for, and allow views of, heritage assets or other locally-valued landmarks. It may be necessary to research historic records from the County Archaeologist or National or Local Records Office.
 - c. **Recreational value:** It must have local significance for recreation, perhaps through the variety of activities it supports, and be of value to the community.
 - d. **Tranquillity:** Some authorities have an existing 'tranquillity map' showing areas that provide an oasis of calm and a space for quiet reflection.

1

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605111422/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalgreenspacestandardangst.aspx

e. **Richness of wildlife:** This might include the value of its habitat, and priority areas may have been identified by the council. It may require some objective evidence, such as a designation, like a wildlife site or Local Nature Reserve.

- 3) **Local in Character and not an Extensive Tract of land:** There is no clarity regarding this other than blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate, particularly if it amounts to a “back door” way to trying to achieve a ‘Green Belt’. There needs to be clear demonstration that the site or space being considered for designation is a local facility. It is evident that the size of an LGS will differ widely according to the circumstances; in one nearby parish a 50 hectare wood has been designated (in the Crowhurst NDP) but most LGS are much smaller.

Table 2: Green Spaces ruled out after application of NPPF Criteria. Ref Green Space Reason for exclusion

Ref	Green space	Reason for exclusion
GS5	Combe Woods	Ruled out due to its large size and its existing protections as ancient woodland and local wildlife site designation. In addition, Tent Hill Trust, made a deposition to ESCC in 2015 under section 31(6) the Highways Act 1980 and section 15A of the Commons Act 2006 to prevent any public rights from becoming established in law on their property.
GS6	All surrounding countryside	Non-specific, extensive tract of land, contrary to NPPF
GS7	20 Acre Field (Crouch Field)	An arable field surrounded by grass margins with paths, making it valued as a local green space by residents in the Bexhill Road area. However, it became the subject of a speculative outline application for 65 houses which, in December 2021, Wealden District Council resolved to permit subject to completion of a legal agreement. The legal agreement has not yet been completed but the site is now for sale. The Secretary of State was requested to ‘call-in’ the decision for review but he declined to do so on the grounds that it did not meet government policy for call-in and was solely a matter for the local planning authority (letter of 15 Feb 2022). The 65 dwellings planned would cover approximately a third of the site leaving a substantial area that could be designated LGS in the future. With this uncertainty it was decided not to include the site at this time.
GS8	Bowling Green	Not accessible to wider public, hidden from view. Long term, this is part of the Recreation Ground should the Bowling Club cease to operate.
GS10	Moons Hill, Marlpits Lane & Combe Lane	Selected individual verges to go forward separately. As a single entity the area is extensive.
GS11	Fields off Moor Hall Drive	Fields off Moor Hall Drive These comprise a number of small fields providing views of scenic value, some on open high ground, others on slopes, some of which are steep. Where the latter slope down to Church Wood they form the

		natural setting of GS2 and are incorporated into that area but inclusion of all the fields risks making it an extensive tract of land. Therefore, the others are excluded notwithstanding that they are crossed by a public path (although some Key Views are identified).
GS12	Circular walk via the Ninfield Transformer Station	A 3 mile walk through varied terrain of fields and woodland in the Catsfield Stream valley. Does not meet criteria as it is a very extensive tract of land with a significant part over the parish boundary.
GS13	Fields behind Manchester Road	A tranquil area with good views towards the ridge top village. However, the area is extensive with limited accessibility. The proposed recreation area and buffer zone between the existing dwellings and the new development to come forward separately see LG12.
GS14	AONB/SSSI	An extensive tract of land which already enjoys some protection.
GS17	End of Church Lane	Open countryside beyond built area, no discreet green space identified. Extensive tract. However, this is a key view point from the village across the Pevensey Levels (see Key Views).
GS18	Normanhurst Estate	Mainly outside the parish boundary in Catsfield. In addition, this land is in the AONB.
GS19	Ashburnham Estate	In the AONB but outside Ninfield Parish boundary in Ashburnham. Combe Wood is a separate entity (owned by Ashburnham Estate) and covered by GS5
GS20	Potman's Lane	Open countryside beyond the built area, extensive, no discreet green space identified.
GS21	Gladwish Farm	A large area in multiple ownership (speculative investment) which has deteriorated over the last 3 decades into scrubland with an illegal dwelling and a smallholding. Does not meet criteria.
GS22	Hooe Road/Lower Street	Verges with some wildflowers on the roadside stretching towards Hooe. Apart from a stretch on the village edge, they are difficult for pedestrians to enjoy due to lack of footway, verges being intermittent and narrow with danger from fast-moving traffic on a road with blind bends.
GS23	Standard Hill Verges (west)	Verges, some wide, with wildflowers on the roadside stretching towards Boreham Bridge. Difficult for pedestrians to enjoy due to lack of footpath access and fast-moving traffic.
GS25	Land between Ninfield & Ashburnham	Outside Ninfield Parish boundary in Ashburnham. Combe Wood is a separate entity (owned by Ashburnham Estate) and covered by GS5
GS26	The Reservoir	Although the site contains an abandoned Royal Ordnance Corp (ROC) tower and underground bunker of local historic significance and the grassland is described as species poor but herb-rich and of notable botanical interest

		(designated as LWS), there is no evidence to demonstrate that it is special to the community. It is mostly screened from the road and path by hedges and public access is prohibited by the owners. Consequently, it is not considered to meet the criteria for LGS.
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Table 3: List of Potential Local Green Spaces Going Forward

Original Ref	New Ref	Green Space
GS3	LG1	The Recreation Ground/ Green
GS9	LG2	Stocks & Whipping Post
GS1/GS2/GS11	LG3	Church Wood with adjacent valley slopes including Church Fields and Church Path
GS5	LG4	The Allotments
GS16	LG5	The Churchyard
GS4/GS24/GS27/GS28	LG6	Roadside Verges at Manchester Road /Combe Lane North (6a), Standard Hill East /Combe Lane South (6b) and Bexhill Road (6c)
GS29	LG7	Proposed Recreation area behind Sparke Gardens, Manchester Road

Map showing 7 sites to be designated as LGS

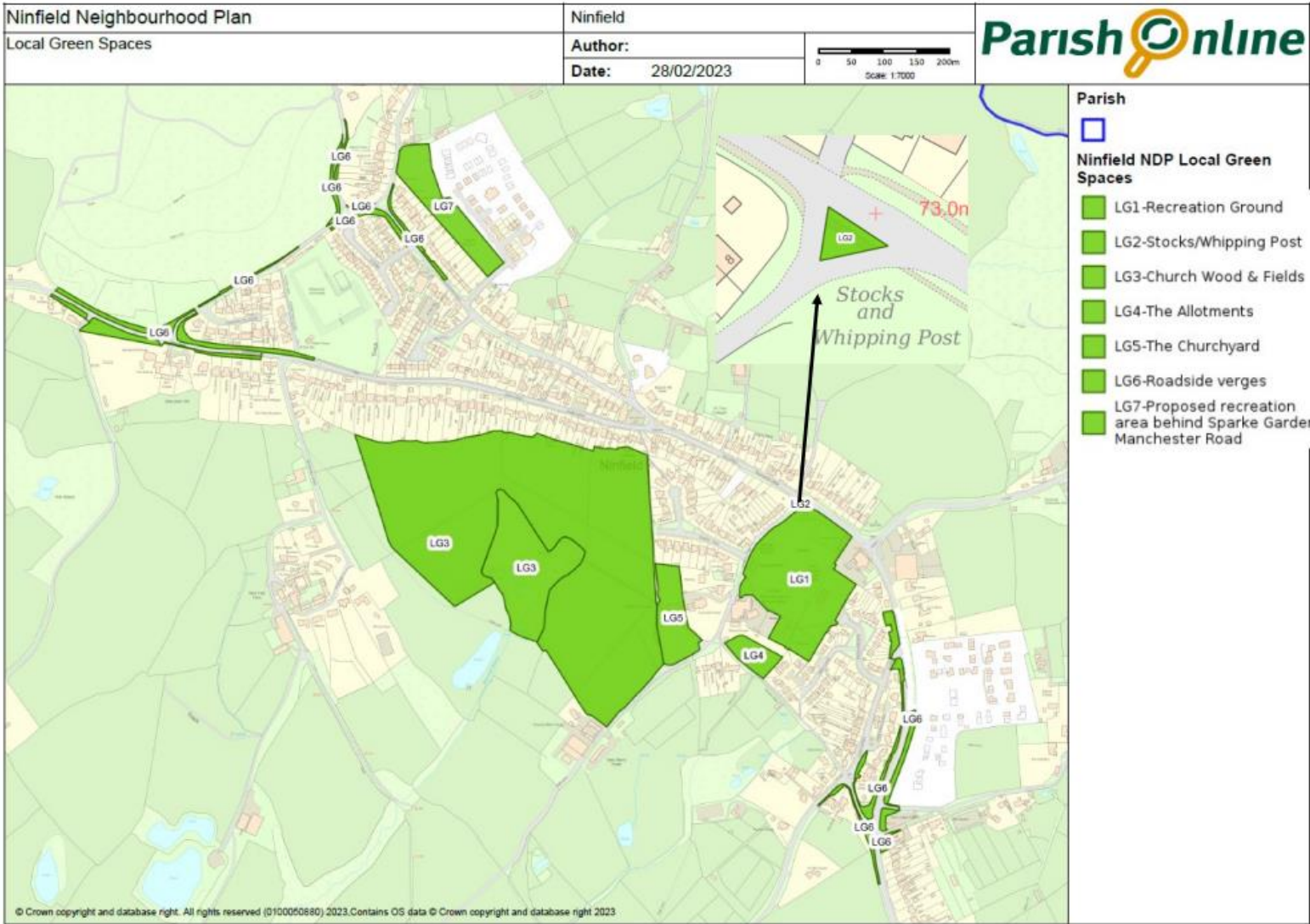


Table 4: All 11 sites as assessed for Local Green Spaces designation unless stated otherwise (PC – Parish Council WDC – Wealden District Council)

	Name of site (as popularly known)	Close proximity to community (yes/no)	Demonstrably special to a local community					Extensive Tract of land? (size if known)	Ownership	Is this site allocated for any other use (yes/no)	Public access	Comment /Designation
			Beauty (yes/no)	History (yes/no)	Recreation (yes/no)	Tranquillity (yes/no)	Wildlife (yes/no)					
LG1	The Recreation Ground	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	Parish Council	NO	YES	LGS
LG2	Stocks & Whipping Post	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	Community	NO	YES	LGS
LG3	Church Wood with adjacent valley slopes including Church Fields & Church Path	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	Private	NO	YES	LGS
LG4	The Allotments	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	Church	NO	NO	LGS
LG5	The Churchyard	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	Church	NO	YES	LGS
LG6 (a)	Combe Lane/ Manchester Road verges	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	ESCC	NO	YES	LGS
LG6 (b)	Standard Hill Verges (E)	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	ESCC	NO	YES	LGS
LG6 (c)	Bexhill Road Verges	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	ESCC	NO	YES	LGS
LG7	Manchester Road buffer zone	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	Private	No	Yes	LGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGS = Local Green Space, AG= Allotment Garden 												

Assessment Results

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG1 – Recreation Ground, Church Lane	
		 <div data-bbox="1160 1177 1966 1273">View across the football pitch towards The Green (A269)</div>
Size	Approx 2.3 hectares	
Site description	The recreation ground was gifted to the Parish by an anonymous donor in 1925.	

	<p>The Sparke Pavilion, which stands on the western edge of the field, was originally built by men in the village and completed in April 1938. However, it was rebuilt in 2016 and now provides modern facilities for sports and events held on the recreation field, such as cricket and football, it also acts as a hub for events including the annual village carnival and the bonfire celebrations.</p> <p>The recreation field itself has very well-tended pitches for cricket and football. There are various wooden benches to sit and enjoy the peace, quiet and outside space. A recent addition is the multi-use games area (for everyone to use outside of school hours), a skate ramp and zip wire in a separate area and also a small playpark for younger children to enjoy.</p> <p>The northern border is the site of the Ridel Memorial Garden with the Queen Elizabeth Garden. This area is cultivated with flower beds and has seating with a Parish Noticeboard. The Beacon here is used to mark important events (both national and local).</p> <p>In the north east corner of the field, nestled amongst tall hedging, is the bowling green. It was moved from its original position beside the school to its present site in 1929. This land is leased to the Bowling Club by the Parish Council.</p> <p>The recreation field provides an important focal point for Parish residents to meet and benefits from a footpath running across the field from Church Lane to Lower Street, providing a safe route for pedestrians away from the busy main road.</p>
Known allocations, protection status or designations	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation	Local Green Space or Public Open Space/Recreation Ground?
Planning history - any	A small area of the land is leased to the village school

existing planning permissions?	
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	YES
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	YES
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	<p>YES, it is the focus of village events e.g. Carnival, Remembrance Sunday and the Bonfire & Fireworks celebrations in addition to hosting weekly cricket and football matches. Other sports are provided for here with a MUGA, skate equipment and a children's play area. The Beacon and Flag pole are sited towards the northern end. The Parish Survey shows that over 40% of residents use the Recreation Ground once a week or more and in addition, 18.9% of respondents listed the Recreation Ground and a green space of importance to them.</p> <p>The Ridell Garden is a popular spot for walkers to rest and enjoy the floral displays. The garden also contains a Parish Noticeboard where residents can both read and post information.</p>



View across the footpath to the skate ramp and the zip-wire.



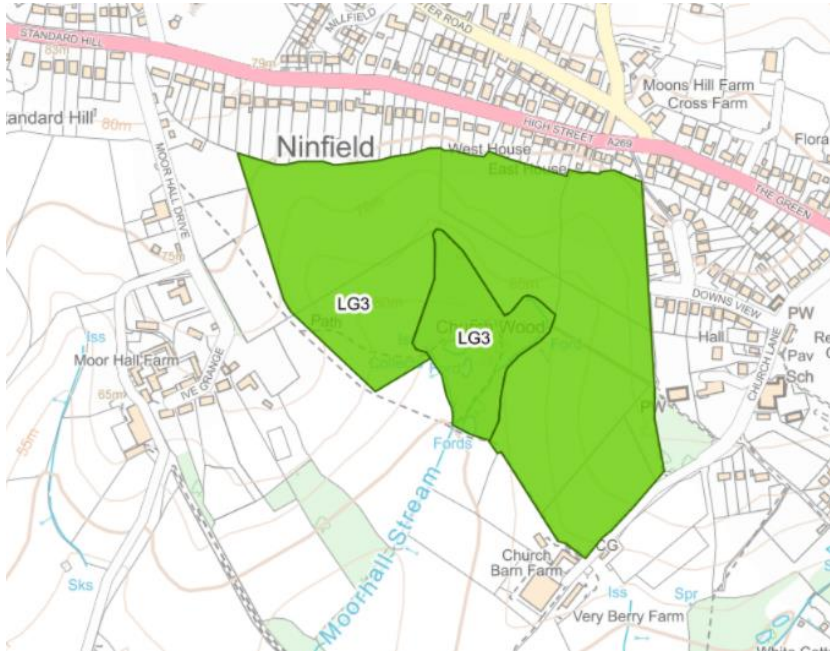
View towards The Green showing the beacon and the flagstaff with the Ridel Garden behind.



View to the east across the cricket square.

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG2 – The Stocks & Whipping Post	
	 <p data-bbox="1375 901 1765 933">The Stocks & Whipping Post</p>	
Size	Approx 43 Square Metres	
Site description	A very small triangular island at the entrance to Church Lane. Mainly grassed with a footpath crossing it parallel to The Green (A269). There are 5 mature Scots Pine trees and 2 younger specimens which are a feature of this part of the village. The Stocks & Whipping Post stand on a rectangle of tarmac next to the path.	
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	Stocks & Whipping Post are Grade 2 listed (Historic England entry number 1353381)	
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	LGS	

Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	NONE
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	Yes
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	Yes
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	The site is the home of the historic Stocks & Whipping Post listed as Grade 2 as c 17th and a rare surviving example of heavy Sussex iron work (thought to be locally made at Ashburnham Forge). The Stocks are marked on the Budgen Map of 1724 (although the location is imprecise). In the 1800's the Stocks gave their name to the part of the village now called The Green (the housing in this part of the village was referred to as "Ninfield Stocks") and the public house (The King's Arms) was known locally as "The Stocks" in the 1800s through to the early part of the 20 th century. The Stocks are an important relic of Ninfield's history and are a local landmark of significance.

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG3 – Church Wood with adjacent valley slopes including Church Fields & Church Path	
	 <div data-bbox="1137 1121 1980 1177" data-label="Caption"> <p>A view along Church Path towards the entrance to the Churchyard</p> </div>	
Size	Approx 12.8 hectares	
Site description	Church Wood combined with the adjoining fields and public paths occupy the distinctive head of the little valley of the Moorhall Stream, on the southwestern edge of the village. The steeply sloping fields of the valley head form the setting of the wood and are crossed by a number of public paths providing	

scenic views, both long-distance and more localised. The fields about the village on their northern and eastern sides.

Church Path: This tarmac footpath (public footpath 4A on the ESCC Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way and shown on the 1844 Tithe Map) runs along the eastern boundary of the field on open high ground adjacent to Downs View. It follows an important and historic north/south route across the village connecting Ninfield Cross (by the Blacksmiths Inn) to Lower Street (with the village shop/post office) via St Mary's Church and the school. The path is very popular with walkers and the views to the South Downs and the sea, across Hooe and the Pevensey Levels are breath-taking. There are seats for the public to enjoy the views.

Church Wood (1.7ha) is community-owned Ancient Woodland which has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The wood is managed by the Ninfield Village Society on behalf of the Parish Council and is a natural resource of biodiversity, recreational and educational value. The wood lies a very short distance to south-west of village school, nestling deeply in the small valley. Springs emerge here as the source of the stream and there are several ponds. As a fragment of ancient woodland, it is highly vulnerable because of its small size, the threat of development on the village edge, and risk of pollution. It is readily accessible to the village being very well-served by a network of footpaths (rights of way). FP6 runs through the wood roughly east-west but there are other informal paths in the wood. To the south, the woodland paths connect with FP7B which in turn connects with FP3B/3A (continuation of Church Lane).

Valley slopes including Church Fields: The 2 fields adjacent to Church Path and St. Mary the Virgin churchyard, on the eastern side of the wood, are named as Upper Church Field and Lower Church Field on the 1844 Tithe Map, the fields on the northern and western sides of the wood having other names. These fields, part disused and part managed grassland, all have steep slopes and are bounded by wire fences and hedgerows with mature trees. The currently disused Upper Field has paths worn over it by prolonged public use notwithstanding a sign stating no public right of way. A public footpath (6 on the Definitive Map) runs between the church and Church Wood, continuing through to Moor Hall Drive (via footpath 7 on the definitive map), providing an important link for residents. The boundaries of the fields retain the ancient field patterns and provide green infrastructure with well-connected vegetation enabling species movements. The trees in the hedgerow along the eastern boundary of Church Path are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. On the edge of Lower Church Field next to the churchyard, a small area has been fenced off and is registered with the Caravan and Motorhome Club. Church Path continues southwards as FP4B across this site enabling the public to

	enjoy the tranquillity of the countryside and panoramic views over the landscape to the sea and Downs.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	Church Wood is LNR
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	Local Green Space/ Area of Special Landscape Value
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	No permissions granted (one application refused October 2020 WD/2020/1166)
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	YES
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	YES
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	<p>YES, the visual amenity that this site provides has been enjoyed for centuries. In the Parish Survey this green space was cited as an important area that warranted protection. 20.4% of residents said the area was especially important to them as a green space. Church Wood is community-owned ancient woodland and a designated Local Nature Reserve which is managed by the Ninfield Village Society on behalf of the Parish Council. With its value as a natural recreational resource very close to the village and school, it is considered justified in designating it as LGS but, on its own, it is a very small and vulnerable fragment. The steeply-sloping small fields around the wood form the head of the valley of the Moorhall Stream. They are an integral part of the setting of the wood and necessary for its appreciation. They appear as a combined entity with the wood in visual, recreational, topographical and ecological terms. It is virtually a very small 'country park', enveloped on two sides by the village with which it has a close relationship. It is a relatively well-defined local character area rather than an extensive tract of land and far from being akin to a 'green belt'. It is enclosed by the higher ground around it, except downstream to the southwest, and it is mainly fringed by the public footpaths as well as by hedges and trees. The extracts which follow from Ordnance Survey 1:25000 (with 5m interval vertical ground contours in brown) and from topographicmap.com (with the highest ground in red and lowest ground in green) show the proposed LGS is virtually encircled by the high ground.</p> <p>Church Path, running along the eastern edge of this area, is a well-used historic route, with public seats, linking the main facilities and heritage areas of the village and providing impressive panoramic views from the open upper edge of the fields over the wood, the valley landscape and beyond to the South Downs and sea. Upper and Lower Church Fields (NB. the fields are named on the 1841-4 Tithe Map) lie between this path and the wood. Upper Church Field and Green Field to the north of the wood are no longer used and reverting to nature. Lower Church Field and Wyland Field to the west of the wood are used for grazing. Notwithstanding the various private ownerships into which the fields have been split, the public right of way network is so extensive and the</p>

views so numerous both within the proposed LGS and beyond it so as to enable residents to value the whole area comprised of these fields and wood for its scenic beauty, tranquillity and natural environment as well as its heritage value including as the setting for the adjacent Grade I listed church at the top of the slope. Its designation as LGS would help safeguard the ancient woodland both visually and ecologically. The wood is a vulnerable fragment because of its very small size and its position at the foot of the surrounding slopes which drain into it. The much greater public accessibility, higher elevation, steepness of the slopes and the smaller scale of the landscape features differentiate it from the valley landscape downstream. Its unspoilt character, with a lack of buildings or significant structures, is also noteworthy having survived better than the Lower Street tributary valley to the south which lies beyond a small ridge of high ground. Designation as LGS is also consistent with the refusal of an application for 70 houses on part of this area on landscape and biodiversity grounds in 2020 (after attracting over 200 objections). If public access can be negotiated with the landowners, it would also redress the 10.91 ha shortfall of '*natural and semi-natural greenspace*' identified in the Wealden Open Space Assessment Report 2022.



Upper Church Field looking towards the north with Downs View (R) and the High Street at the top.



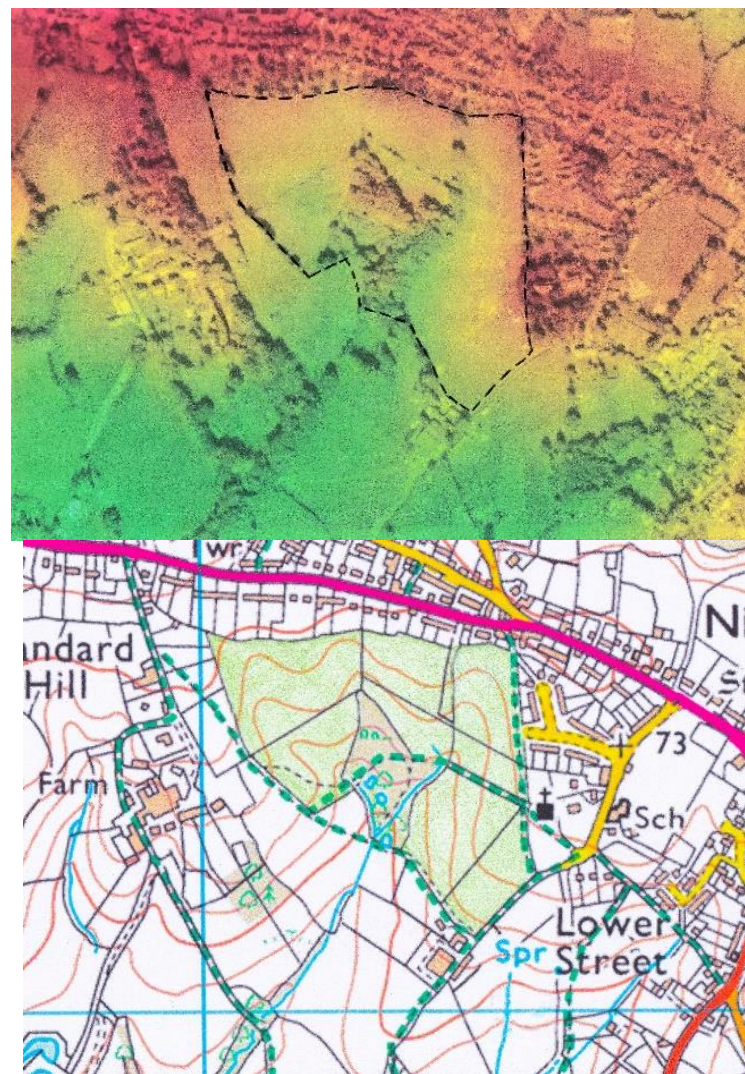
A view from Church Path across Lower Church Field towards the south west with the South Downs National Park in the distance



Footpath 6 runs between Upper and Lower Church Fields towards Church Wood.



The main footpath within Church Wood



Upper image shows topography (orange = high ground, green = lower lying ground). Lower image is an extract from Ordnance Survey of the same area with proposed LGS shaded in green.

Site Ref, Name and Address		LG4- The Allotments, Church Lane	
			
Size		0.29 hectares	
Site description	The allotment site is roughly rectangular and is bordered by mature hedging. Individual plots are divided informally with grass pathways. The ground was conveyed to the Ninfield school managers in 1948 from Lady Brassey and others and then at a subsequent date, conveyed to the church. Part of the allotment site was sold in 1998 to the resident in the Old		

	School House to create a buffer between the allotments and the school. All funds from the sale and income from the allotments are held in trust and are used to assist the school in purchasing items which are not provided by the Local Authority. There are now 12 allotments (all currently let) with a waiting list of five. One allotment is let to the school and is used to help in the curriculum, particularly on the topic of Dig for Victory during World War 2. Another plot is let to the Scouts and Muddy Boots preschool have the use of a half plot thanks to the generosity of one tenant. As there is no running water on the site the rental cost per plot is only £10 per annum. Installation of a water supply would enhance the site significantly.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	NO
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	Local Green Space
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	NONE
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	YES
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	YES
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	YES, the site is fully utilised and has a waiting list. Some residents do not have sufficient space within their residential curtilage for growing fruit and vegetables and value access to this additional space. The site is also used for educational purposes by the school and the Scouts. Tenants enjoy physical and mental well-being benefits of working on their plots and there is a strengthened sense of community as a result. The site was identified as a place of green tranquillity in the Parish Survey by a number of residents (1.6%).

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG5 – The Churchyard, Church Lane	
	 <div data-bbox="1272 1158 1872 1254">The newer northern section of the Churchyard</div>	
Size	Approx 0.67 hectares	

Site description	<p>The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin is a grade I listed building, Listing NGR: TQ7050212288. This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) for its special architectural or historic interest.</p> <p>The Churchyard encircles the Church with the oldest part to the south and a newer section to the north. The southern section contains graves dating back to the 17th century but recorded burials in the register start in 1878 and number 652. Burials in the northern section began in 1930. The churchyard contains one Commonwealth war grave from the First World War and one from the Second World War and are maintained by the War Graves Commission.</p> <p>There was originally space for around 500 graves in the newer section, however this is now reaching capacity with only a limited number of plots left. Most of the graves are doubles which has helped to continue the burials of family members. All people living in the Parish or having a link to the Parish have a right to be buried in the churchyard if space is available. Recently more people have decided to be cremated and the cremated remains have been interred around the east and north boundaries and in the space between the grave rows in the middle of the churchyard.</p> <p>On the approach to the main door of the Church, within the churchyard, stands an ancient yew tree (at least 700 years old), which requires the help of wooden supports to help maintain its continued existence.</p>	
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	St Mary's Church is Grade 1 listed building	
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	Local Green Space	
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	NONE	
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	YES	
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	YES	
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	<p>Yes, the Churchyard is a special area of tranquillity with highly significant historical importance. Many members of the local community have family and friends buried here and it is a quiet place to remember them. It is a place of peace in which to pause for walkers using Church Path. A large part has been undisturbed for almost a century and as result is rich in plant and insect life. Areas away from the pathway are particularly important for wildlife.</p>	



A view to the south across the oldest part of the Churchyard



One of the ancient yew trees in the southern area of the Churchyard

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG6(a) – Combe Lane Verges & Manchester Road Verges	
	 <div data-bbox="1240 1222 1794 1318">The verge in Combe Lane looking north</div>	
Size	N/A	

Site description	<p>The junction of Combe Lane and Manchester Road adjoins Combe Wood which is within the AONB and a designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS). This vicinity has a very rural feel, typical of the High Weald back lanes.</p> <p>There is a grassed triangle with traditional finger post road sign at the Combe Hill junction at the top of a steep slope running downhill to the northwest.</p> <p>West of the junction, Combe Lane has a grass verge on the north side before it becomes very narrow between hedges and banks.</p> <p>On the south side, opposite the junction, the verge curves round eastwards and merges with the Manchester Road verge, opposite the Marl pits Lane junction where there is another grassed triangle with traditional finger post direction sign. Both sides are flanked by banks (with trees and bushes) which decrease in height eastwards. Combe Hill descends down a steep slope away from the village towards Ashburnham with an S-bend and is very deeply sunken between high banks, the one on the east side being extremely high and densely wooded, completely hiding the rear of bungalows in Marl pits Lane. It is deeply shaded at all times. The southern part of Combe Lane towards Standard Hill has a wide grass verge on the eastern side which is rich in wildflowers for about 100m. A wide range of species include Cuckoo Flower/Milkmaids (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>), Wood Anemone (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>) and Bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>). The western side has a narrow, very rural verge, mainly hedge which forms the roadside edge of Combe Wood.</p> <p>Verges continue along the western part of Manchester Road with a designated wild flower verge running up to the junction with Coombe Shaw. The range of species here are indicative of ancient meadow previously grazed by cattle and sheep. The verges are owned by East Sussex County Council and managed by Ninfield Parish Council. Part of the verge is a designated wildflower verge and species including Early-purple Orchid (<i>Orchis mascula</i>) and Fly Agaric (<i>Amanita muscaria</i>). A new initiative is underway to improve the range of wildflower species in this and other verges throughout the village.</p>	
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None (part designated as wildflower verge)	
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	N/A	
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None	
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	Yes	
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	Yes	

<p>Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?</p>	<p>Yes, the verges contribute to the rural character of the area and are enjoyed by road users and pedestrians. These are ancient lanes and the verges are comprised of a wide variety of species, they connect different areas of habitat and form part of a green network through the village/parish. A new initiative is underway to enhance the range of wildflower species in this and other verges. Walkers, horse riders and other road users enjoy the green and rural character that these verges bring to the area.</p>
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View northwards down Combe Lane towards Ashburnham



View south along Combe Lane towards Standard Hill



Manchester Road wildflower verge looking west

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG6(b) – Standard Hill Verges
	
Size	N/A
Site description	<p>These verges are a very important feature of western entrance to village on A269, giving this approach a very soft edge with a distinctly rural character. There are wide verges from Boreham Bridge past Hazards Green but these narrow down as road enters an uphill S-bend past 19th century cottages before emerging at top of hill where there are 'Ninfield' and 30mph signs. Here the verges broaden out again, on south side is a large, roughly triangular grass verge in front of a small copse on the west side of Standard Hill House (Grade II* listed). Further to the west is a new dwelling ('The View') and the gateway to a track serving Lower Barn.</p> <p>On the north side of the road there are triangular areas of verge on both sides of the junction with Combe Lane. The larger one on the west side has a very rural feel but is partially damaged by vehicle parking/turning. On the east side the triangular area has a public bench, flower planters and a post box. There are prominent oak and silver birch trees and these are underplanted with snowdrops, crocus and daffodils. Wildflower species here include Oxeye Daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>), Rough Hawks-beard and (<i>Crepis biennis</i>) and Field Blewit (<i>Lepistrea saeva</i>) is also present. Proceeding eastwards the south side verge narrows but then widens, with a few small trees and hedges on the frontages of the bungalows, as far as Standard Hill Cottages where it ends.</p>

	The wider northern side verge continues eastwards, as a grassed area backed by a continuous hedge (forming the rear boundary of bungalows in Standard Hill Close) to the brick/tile bus shelter with adjacent planters and public seat, finishing where there is a long continuous hedge with oak and pine trees along the boundary of the reservoir site. The verges are owned by East Sussex County Council and managed by Ninfield Parish Council. A new initiative is underway to enhance the range of wildflower species in this and other verges.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	NONE
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	N/A
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	NO
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	YES
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	YES
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	Yes, the verges contribute to the rural character of the area and are enjoyed by all road users. The seating here is very popular with walkers and cyclists who pause here to enjoy the green space and its view across the road to the historic Standard Hill House. These verges are rich in wildlife and connect different areas of habitat forming part of a green network through the village/parish.



View west along Standard hill from Moor Hall Drive



View east along Standard Hill from Combe Lane junction

Site Ref, Name and Address	LG6(c) – Bexhill Road Verges, (Molly's Corner), Bexhill Road	
	 <div data-bbox="1137 1054 1865 1110">Verge opposite Memorial Hall on the A269 Bexhill Road</div>	
Size	N/A	
Site description	<p>The verges here are another example of a residual fragment of an ancient meadow, previously used for grazing stock which is rich in wildflower species (Tithe Map 1844). There is a rural feel to this area despite the adjacent A269 main road and it forms a green gateway to the village. A wide range of species include Cuckoo Flower/Milkmaids (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>), Wood Anemone (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>), Early-purple Orchid (<i>Orchis mascula</i>), Sheep's Sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosella</i>) and Bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>). The verges provide a green gateway into the village from the eastern part of the Parish. The line of mature trees forming a narrow strip of woodland running along the eastern side of</p>	

	<p>the A269 Bexhill Road enhance the green character of the area and will be a valuable screen to mask the large estate of housing currently under construction. The cut through from the main road to Lower Street is the old lane (the principal route to Bexhill before the "bypass" was built). The banks are steep and species rich with a canopy of mature trees above and it retains a country lane character. The verges are owned by East Sussex County Council and managed by Ninfield Parish Council. A new initiative is underway to enhance the range of wildflower species in this and other verges.</p>	
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None	
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	N/A	
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	No	
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	Yes	
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	Yes	
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	<p>Yes, the verges contribute to the rural character of the area and are enjoyed by all road users including walkers and cyclists. These are ancient lanes and the verges are comprised of a rich and varied Flora, they form part of the network of green corridors connecting different areas of habitat throughout the parish.</p>	



Verges around Ninfield are rich in wildflower species.



View towards Lower Street from the A269 Bexhill Road

Site Ref, Name and Address		LG7 – (Future Recreation area behind Manchester Road)	
			
Size		0.87 hectares	
Site description	This green space is be created as a “Proposed Recreation Area” zone as part of the planned estate of 80 houses on land behind Manchester Road (WD/2017/0038/MAO). It is currently an unused area of agricultural land (previously farmed as part of Church Farm). The area will screen the new estate from the existing housing in Manchester Road and is to be set aside as a recreational space. It will incorporate the ancient hedgerow with mature trees on the eastern edge and the western side is comprised of garden boundaries of existing housing along Manchester Road. The area is designated as public open space in the application. Original plans included a local equipped play area (LEAP), but this facility has been dropped in the latest iteration of the scheme.		
Known allocations, protection status or designations?		Public Open Space	

Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	LGS
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	WD/2017/0038/MAO
Is it in close proximity to the community it would serve?	Yes
Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	Yes
Does the site have local significance? Can the site be shown to be demonstrably special to the local community? How?	There are no other public green areas in this part of the village and given the large number of new residents planned for this development this will be a much-needed facility. The retained ancient hedgerow is rich in wildlife (including dormice, insects and bats). There are small ponds in various locations which offer important habitat to amphibians.



The view across the northern section looking east



Looking towards the ancient hedgerow from the north (across the development site).