

### TOPIC PAPER 3: LOCAL GREEN SPACES – ACKLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (Updated following Regulation 14 consultation)

The purpose of this background topic paper is to provide supporting information/evidence regarding the value of green spaces in Acklington Parish, in order to support their designation as Local Green Spaces through the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan.

Paragraph 101 of the NPPF states:

*The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should 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 updated, and be capable, of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*

In order to qualify as Local Green Space, the land needs to meet certain criteria as defined in paragraph 102 of the NPPF:

*The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*

- a) in reasonably 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) be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.*

The areas proposed as Local Green Spaces in Acklington Parish are:

**LGS1: Land north and east of St. Omer Road (Acklington)**

**LGS2: Land and play area to the north of Churchill Way (Acklington)**

**LGS3: Land to the southwest of Churchill Way (Acklington)**

**LGS4: Rigg and Furrow fields on the north side of B6345 (Acklington)**

**LGS5: Open space in Guyzance Village**

Each proposed Local Green Space is identified below, with a short summary of the space, information about why it is important to the local community, and how it complies with paragraph 100 of the NPPF. Photographs are provided to help illustrate the value of each space.

Some of the local green spaces identified are also identified in the Northumberland Local Plan as 'protected open space' (POS). Although this allocation gives these spaces some protection, it does not afford the level of protection that a local green space designation does; any land identified as local green space must be treated in a manner consistent with land in the green belt.

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#### **LGS 1: LAND NORTH AND EAST OF ST. OMER ROAD, ACKLINGTON**

This proposed local green space consists of the green area north of St. Omer Road and follows the same outline as the existing POS allocation (see map below). However, the proposed LGS will include a small area where there is currently an electricity sub-station on the corner of Quarry Road (photograph below) where there is a mature tree, and a small wildlife area used by children as a play area. The main area north of Omer Road consists of an area of amenity grassland, with a number of mature trees along the boundary. The site is valued for its biodiversity and recreational value, as well as providing a buffer between housing to the south and the main road through Acklington to the north.

The space meets the tests set out in the NPPF. It is in reasonable proximity to the local community; it is not an extensive tract of land, and it is valued locally for its wildlife and recreational value.



*Figure 1: Extract from Google Earth showing LGS sites in Acklington*

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*Figure 2: Land north of St. Omer Road as shown on NLP policies map*

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#### LGS2: LAND AND PLAY AREA TO THE NORTH OF CHURCHILL WAY (ACKLINGTON)

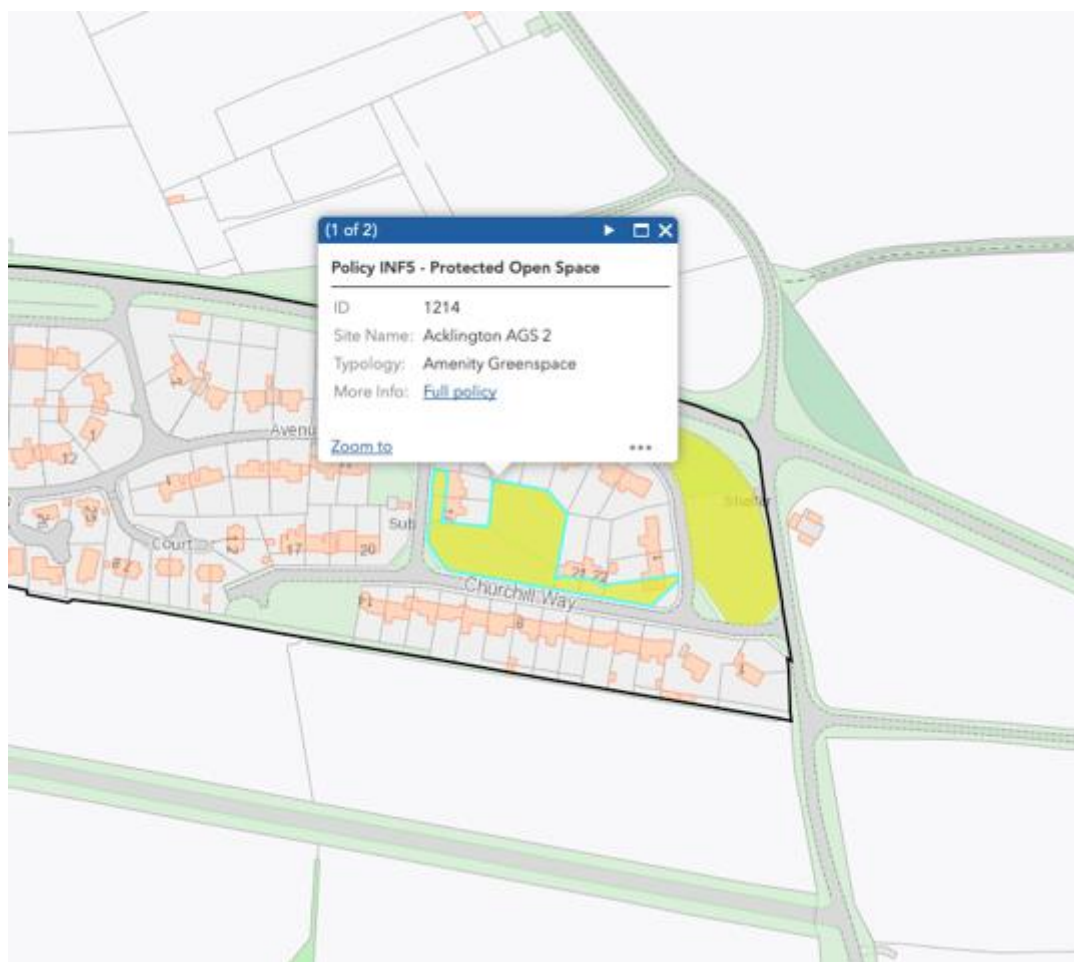


Figure 3: Site as shown on NLP policies map



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*Figure 4: Aerial photograph of site showing play area and LGS designation*

This informal grassed area is already designated as Protected Open Space in the Northumberland Local Plan (see map above). The Local Green Space designation follows the boundary of the already identified public open space, but also includes a small area to the south (currently partly occupied by an electricity sub-station) part of which provides a place that is valued for its biodiversity and as a place for children to play.

The land does not have any planning permissions relating to it. It is not in green belt and has no historic environment designations.

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*Figure 5: Aerial photograph of land proposed as LGS north of Churchill Way close up*



*Figure 6: Existing allocation in Northumberland Local Plan*

This land is also already allocated in the NLP as POS but is not correctly defined on the Local Plan map; the southern area appears to be incorrectly defined, as it encroaches into the front gardens of



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dwellings (21/22 Churchill Way, 1 St. Omer Road and 9/10 St. Omer Road). The proposed LGS will not include those areas but will just include the area shown on the aerial photograph above.

This proposed Local Green Space meets the tests set out in the NPPF:

- It is reasonably close to the proximity of the community it serves;
- It is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular significance for its recreational value as it has a play area, and informal recreational space for play.
- It is local in character, and is not an extensive tract of land



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#### LGS3: LAND SW OF CHURCHILL WAY, ACKLINGTON

This area of amenity land has been in use by the community for recreational purposes for many years. There are no live planning applications on the site, although there has been a planning application here in the past.



*Figure 7: Aerial photograph showing proposed LGS (mown area to east of dwellings)*

This LGS meets the tests set out in the NPPF:

- It is reasonably close to the proximity of the community it serves, within the village of Acklington.
- It is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular significance for its wildlife and recreational value.
- It is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.



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*Figure 8: Photograph of land to west of Churchill Way*

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#### LGS 4: RIGG and FURROW LAND NORTH OF THE B6345



Figure 9: Aerial photograph showing LGS designations and wider field systems of which they form part

The fields identified above form an important setting to Acklington and are valued by the local community for their biodiversity value and their historic value. These fields comprise part of much a wider ancient field/rigg and furrow system (see map and maps below to show the wider area of historic interest). A LGS cannot comprise an extensive tract of land, so these two paddocks have been identified as they are the spaces that are closest to the village and are therefore most readily viewed by residents as an important green space within the setting of the village and representative of the wider historic field systems of which they comprise a part.



Figure 10: Published 1966 (National Library of Scotland) - map of Acklington showing old field systems to the north.

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This proposed Local Green Space meets the tests set out in the NPPF:

- It is reasonably close to the proximity of the community it serves, being on the roadside of the village in Acklington, of historic and biodiversity interest.
- It is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular significance for its heritage value and for its wildlife value.
- It is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. The rest of the field systems are also of interest, but these two fields are the ones that are most well-related to the village.

Residents have reported seeing barn owls hunting on these fields, and the hedgerows on the road frontage are species rich and of high biodiversity value.



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#### LGS 5: SMALL PADDOCKS FRONTING ONTO MAINSTREET, GUYZANCE VILLAGE

These two small fields fronting onto Main Street in Guyzance which hold particular significance to the community for the role they play in the historic environment in Guyzance, and for their biodiversity value. These two small fields have species rich hedgerows along the road frontage and form important open gaps within the village. The undeveloped pasture makes a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 11: Aerial photograph of LGS in Guyzance Village

This proposed Local Green Space meets the tests set out in the NPPF:

- It is reasonably close to the proximity of the community it serves, being in the heart of Guyzance Village;
- It is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular significance for its heritage value and for its wildlife value in the middle of the village.
- It is local in character, and is not an extensive tract of land

There is no public access to either of these LGS areas. However, its historic significance has been made clear when comments were made by Historic England in relation to past planning applications on the proposed LGS area, and by the Council's conservation officer in a recently refused planning application at the site. Conservation Officer comments stated: *'The paddock that is now the proposed development area has remained historically undeveloped and is part of how Guyzance has evolved. The paddock is an established and positive feature of the GCA both today and historically. The special interest of the GCA derives in part from its hamlet layout, materials and forms. The open*

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*paddock is also part of the setting of the listed buildings to the east and west and contributes positively to their significance as heritage assets and to our ability to appreciate their significance.'*

This plot of land on the south side of Guyzance Village opens on to the main street through the historic hamlet and reflect its agricultural origins. The interplay of historic buildings and small fields is a vital part of the hamlet's rural character, and this historic pattern of development is clear and valued by the local community in this area.

In addition to the historic interest of the site, there is also a clear biodiversity value to this site, particularly regarding the species rich hedgerow that forms the roadside boundary in Guyzance Village.