

Plumpton Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Local Green Spaces and Green Infrastructure

1. Background

The Parish of Plumpton lies within and adjacent to the South Downs National Park. The Plumpton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (PPNP) recognises that any policies relating to Local Green Spaces has a requirement to reflect the policy and outcome objectives of the South Downs National Park Authority's Local Plan and specifically Strategic Policy (SD14) pertaining to Green Infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure is the term given to the areas of countryside that intersperse the built environment. It comprises natural and semi-natural features, green spaces such as parks and allotments, and water courses. All these features coalesce to provide an infrastructure that, if well planned and managed, can enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of local communities and wildlife.

Maintaining and protecting Local Green Spaces within the landscape will also enhance the capacity of its natural resources, habitats and species to adjust to climate change and external pressures.

Using initiatives to improve and maintain rights of way and access to green space increases usage for a broader spectrum of the population and wildlife, and aims to protect or reduce conflict with wildlife habitats where this might occur.

Incorporating, reinforcing and linking Green Infrastructure will improve connectivity and protect local green spaces. This, in turn, can be seen to be of direct benefit to the health and wellbeing of both residents and visitors alike, in enabling healthy outdoor activity and relaxation.

Local Green Infrastructure assets are identified and included in Neighbourhood Plans with the aim of safeguarding these areas from any developments that would essentially damage the connectivity of the green network.

Any housing developments undertaken would be required to facilitate improvements to the Green Infrastructure either within their development design or by the developers' contribution.

It should also be noted that there is increasing effort to encourage recognition of the limited impact on the conservation of wildlife and its habitats that compartmentalising wildlife and landscape has; there is increasing concern to maintain and enhance the wider countryside, the only way that will provide for a vast number of species. See, for example, www.wildlifetrusts.org/living-landscape and sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign/living-landscapes

See also the Landscape & Biodiversity report chapter 11. Ecosystem services and sustainability.

PPNP policies aim to fulfil these objectives by identifying landscapes and habitats that we wish to protect, preserve and enhance, and ensuring any proposed development does not obstruct or remove a public right of way. The Parish is already well served by a network of footpaths and bridleways that give immediate access to the local countryside. The policies aim to safeguard this immediacy of access.

2. Local Green Spaces

The main settlements within the Parish are surrounded by multi-function green spaces which contribute to the natural life support system for people and wildlife. This land should support native species, maintain ecological processes and contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 76-78 states that specific areas of land that are demonstrably special to the local community may be protected against development through designation as Local Green Space (LGS) and can be applied through a Neighbourhood Plan. The Local Green Space 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.

Further guidance is given in: <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/>. While there is no definition of an 'extensive tract of land', the Natural England definition of Green Infrastructure (see below) allows for 'much larger sites' in the 'wider countryside'.

3. Green Infrastructure

Natural England defines Green Infrastructure as follows:

“Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.

“Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.”

Further information can be found in

Natural England 2009. Green Infrastructure Guidance. Natural England NE176. 107pp.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35033?category=49002>

Other definitions exist, but the principles remain the same.

4. Proposed Local Green Spaces

Identified here are seven sites proposed for Local Green Spaces within the parish that are demonstrably special to the local community. These sites are shown in this document on Map 1, and on the Policies Map of the main Neighbourhood Plan.

Site: LGS1

Site name: King George V Playing Fields (including Tennis Courts)

Location: Centred on TQ366161. A large area of amenity grassland between the railway and the Bevern Stream just to the east of Station Road

Map: Site LGS1

Area: 4ha

Ownership: Plumpton Parish

Description: A large area of amenity grassland with a ditch along the east and west boundaries feeding into the Bevern Stream, which makes up the northern boundary. The railway borders to the south. It is mainly used for sports, but includes a small children's play area, a wildlife walk, a sports pavilion (used also by a local playgroup) and a car park. There is a species-rich overgrown hedge and tree line along the banks of the Bevern and to a lesser extent along the east and west borders. An area along the western boundary is managed as wildflower meadow, although parts of the northern borders have a richer floral diversity.

The area is under consideration for designation as an Archaeological Notification Area due to its location adjacent to the Bevern Stream and its potential for prehistoric and Romano-British archaeological interest (needs research).

The tennis courts are owned by Plumpton Parish, but are actually in East Chilmington. A small field between the tennis courts and Percy's Patch is privately owned.

Value to the community: One of the sites most identified by villagers in the parish questionnaire as of great value. It is well used for a range of sports and other leisure and recreational activities by residents and non-residents of all ages.

Access: Open access.



LGS1. King George V Playing Fields

Site: LGS2**Site name:** Bevernside Pocket Park and allotments**Location:** Centred on TQ363163. Allotments and wooded wetland alongside and north of Bevern Stream, west of Station Road**Map:** Site LGS2**Area:** 0.67ha**Ownership:** Plumpton Parish**Description:** The allotments occupy a small area adjacent to Station Road, running up a slope from the Bevern Stream to The Riddens. The lower plots can be seasonally flooded.

The Bevernside Pocket Park is an area of old (probably ancient) woodland on the north side of the Bevern Stream between the allotments and housing in Riddens Close. It is a wet woodland, principally of ash, field maple, oak and willow, with an understorey including a lot of blackthorn, and a ground flora dominated by meadowsweet, ramsons and cow parsley. Under the National Vegetation Classification system it is a less common sub-community (W8f). It is frequently flooded and contains a lot of flood debris and other debris. It hosts a long-established rookery and a good range of other bird species use the wood and the stream here.

Value to the community: The allotments are oversubscribed at the moment and additional allotment land is being sought.

The patch of streamside woodland is much appreciated by local residents. The area was acquired by the Parish Council under the national Pocket Park scheme. Pocket Parks are open areas of land:

- owned and managed by local people;
- providing free, open access for all at all times;
- helping to protect and conserve local wildlife, heritage and landscape.

The nature of the site (frequent flooding with associated erosion and deposition of stream-borne debris and with fairly dense and impenetrable vegetation) renders the site unsuitable as a readily accessible leisure area, but it remains an important element of the village Green Infrastructure and a valued informal nature reserve for a range of species.

Access: Open access.



LGS2. Allotments: view south to Bevern Stream



LGS2. Pocket Park: Bevern Stream in summer



LGS2. Pocket Park: Bevern Stream in winter

Site: LGS3

Site name: Village Green

Location: Centred on TQ363166. Area of public land situated between the Village Hall and Station Road

Map: Site LGS3

Area: 0.47ha (including pond)

Ownership: Plumpton Parish

Description: A small area of amenity grassland located between the Village Hall and Station Road. It has a few exotic and native trees, a seasonally ditch-fed pond in the south west corner, with the well-vegetated ditch running out (under the road) in the north-east corner. There is also an area of scrub between the pond and houses to the east. The pond is well-stocked with fish and of limited wildlife value.

Value to the community: One of the sites most identified in the parish questionnaire as valued by villagers for amenity purposes. Apart from general leisure purposes and forming a green space at the heart of the village, it is used for a range of education and entertainment events and is a focal point within the village.

Access: Open access.



LGS3. Village Green

Site: LGS4

Site name: Riddens Wood

Location: Centred on TQ358170. A small woodland on the western border of the Parish adjacent to Little Inholmes Farm

Map: Site LGS4

Area: 3.5ha (approx.)

Ownership: Unknown; all efforts to trace owner have failed. Last sold in c.1990.

Description: Designated Ancient Woodland, this wood is mostly old hornbeam coppice, with some introduced trees and shrubs on the site of a former garden within its boundaries. A number of scarce plants are found here and an impressive display of bluebells.

Value to the community: One of the Parish's few patches of Ancient Woodland and the only one close to the main settlement. Also known as the 'Chinese Woods' after the formal garden (now all but vanished) created in part of it in the mid-1900s. Much loved by the villagers (it is included as part of the second most important site identified in the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire) for itself and for its place in the village history. As noted above, it is also of importance for its status as Ancient Woodland and for the rare species that are able to thrive there.

Access: No permitted access; a footpath runs alongside the northern boundary of the wood.



LGS4. Riddens Wood: in summer



LGS4. Riddens Wood: in winter

Site: LGS5

Site name: Fields on Little Inholmes Farm

Location: Centred on TQ362168. Fields to the north of West Gate and west of Station Road.

Map: Site LGS5

Area: 6.8ha (approx.)

Ownership: Westgate (Little Inholmes Farm)

Description: Part of an area of permanently grazed fields separated by hedgerows and shaws crossed by ditches and several small ponds. A piece of typical historic local cultural landscape described in the Historic Landscape Classification as Early Post-Medieval Formal Enclosure fields, with some hedges species-rich and ancient (pre-Tithe map) and a generally richly structured and varied habitat. An unpublished report on the history of the farm has been compiled in Millum (2006: Millum, D. 2006. A History of Little Inholmes Farm, Plumpton Green, East Sussex, from 1840 to the Present. Unpublished project report, University of Sussex). Ancient woodland (Riddens Wood) within 100m. The site contributes to Local Green Infrastructure and to the integrity of the farmed area. Breeding ponds of great crested newt immediately adjacent to site, and other European Protected Species and other protected species present. Of birds five Schedule 1 species, none regular; Red List 4spp regular; Amber List 8spp regular. Hedgerows important for nesting, corridor and refuge, ponds of limited wildlife interest at present. One tree with little owl nesting for well over 50 years.

Value to the community: Identified by villagers as the second most important area to them in a questionnaire and other consultation (second to the Playing Fields). Identified for its important and scenic landscape, including views of the South Downs from the footpath along the northern boundary, and its biodiversity. An overwhelming number (94%) of parishioners said that the footpath access and countryside contributed significantly to the quality of life in Plumpton. The footpaths here on this side of Station Road were the most frequently identified as important to them.

A Section 106 Agreement relates to this area. This prevents development here for perpetuity (defined as 80 years) from 1994. Plumpton Parish Council and Lewes District Council negotiated this Agreement on behalf of the community in recognition of the value of the area to the community as open green space. Its designation as a Local Green Space would endorse this Agreement.

Access: A footpath follows the northern boundary of the site, leading towards Riddens Wood before dividing to connect with the north–south bridleway – a former drove road from St Helena Lane south to the Downs.

Note. Although the largest site proposed here, it is not extreme in relation to the size of sites agreed elsewhere. While the criteria state that it should not be an 'extensive tract of land', there is no definition of this and the only discussion so far relates to much larger sites. Natural England's guidance suggests that more than 20ha would be considered an extensive tract of land, but Natural England does suggest that larger sites are more acceptable (and often necessary) in

wider countryside areas (as here). A test case resulted in a proposed area of 19ha (and one of 32ha) being rejected. These figures are far in excess of the size of the site proposed here.



LGS5. Fields of Little Inholmes farm: view north in winter



LGS5. Fields of Little Inholmes Farm: view west in summer, Riddens Wood in background

Site: LGS6

Site name: Field west of Station Road and between Trillium and Inholms Farm.

Location: Centred on TQ363173. Field to west of Station Road and between Trillium and Inholms Farm

Map: Site LGS6

Area: 3.7ha (approx.)

Ownership: Shaw Farm

Description: Heavily sheep-grazed field with species-rich hedges to north and east. The vegetation suggests a much sandier soil than most of the neighbouring countryside. The area alongside the road was part of the wide 'drove' road with very wide verges of manorial roadside waste. By the first edition Ordnance Survey maps (1870s) the old drove road had been considerably reduced in width to its current road width. The rest of the area is described in the Historic Landscape Characterisation as Early Post-Medieval formal enclosure fields.

Value to the community: The site is proposed primarily to maintain an east-west open area across the north end of the proposed development area centred around Plumpton Green. With site LGS7 it would provide a corridor as a contribution to Green Infrastructure. The view from the

road by the top of this field looks across the top of the village to the South Downs; that view has been highlighted as important to many people and should not be impaired by development.

Access: Currently none.



LGS6. Land south of Inholms Farm: view west from road

Site: LGS7

Site name: Field east of Station Road and between Old Police House and Lentrige Barn/House

Location: Centred on TQ364173. Field to east of Station Road and between the Old Police House and Lentrige Barn/House

Map: Site LGS7

Area: 2.3ha (approx.)

Ownership: Thomas/ Innes-Whitehouse

Description: Lightly sheep-grazed field with species-rich hedge to west (status of other hedges not known). The area alongside the road was part of the wide 'drove' road with very wide verges of manorial roadside waste. By the first edition Ordnance Survey maps (1870s) the old drove road had been considerably reduced in width to its current road width, although there are still some trees marking the boundary of the roadside waste. The rest of the area is described in the Historic Landscape Characterisation as Early Post-Medieval formal enclosure fields.

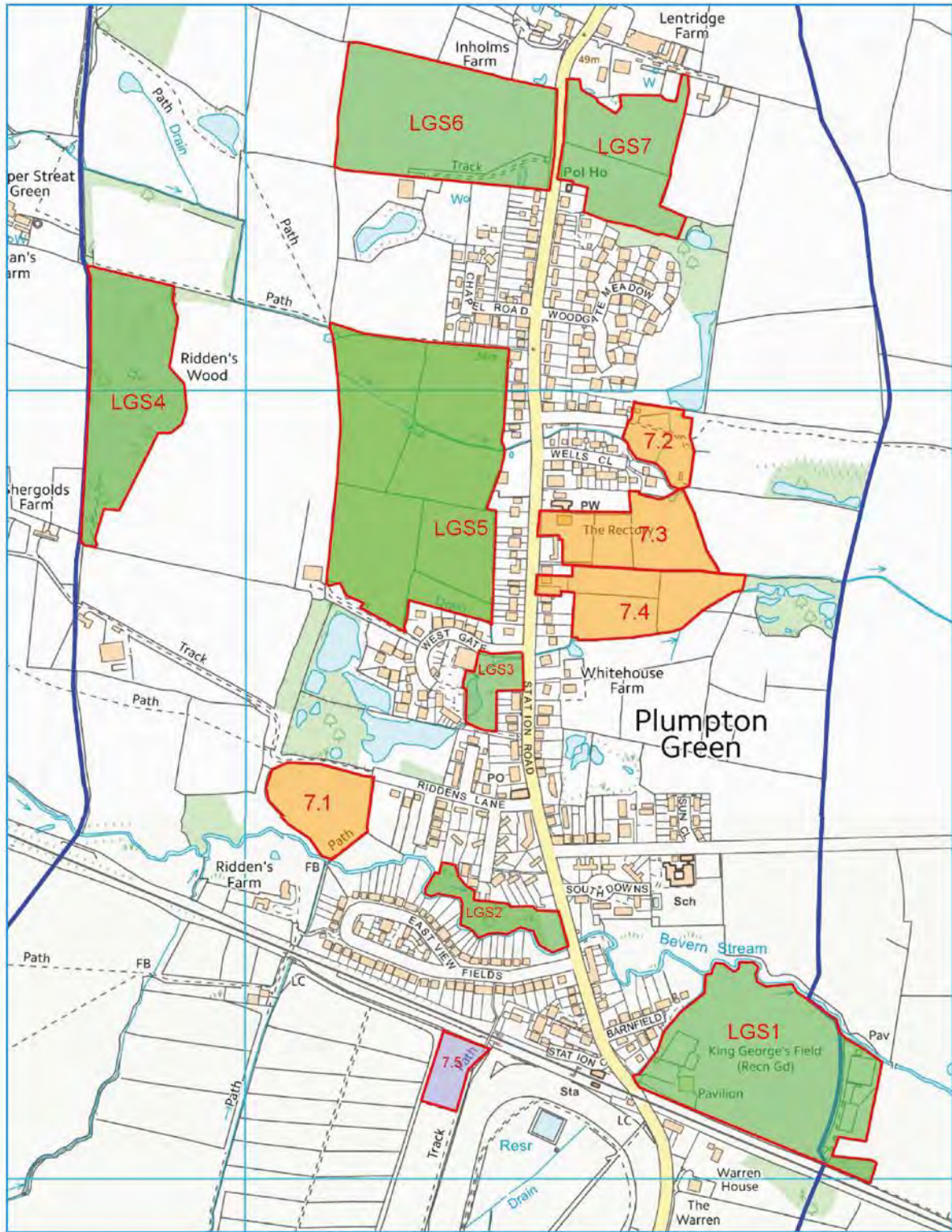
Value to the community: The site is proposed primarily to maintain a local east-west open area between buildings at the north end of the current Plumpton Green main settlement area; with site LGS6 it would provide a corridor as a contribution to Green Infrastructure.

Not yet surveyed for its importance to biodiversity.

Access: None, and none proposed.



LGS7. Land north of Old Police House: view east from road



Map 1. Plumpton Green with proposed Local Green Spaces marked in green (and proposed sites for housing development marked in orange)