



Loss of Holybourne Play Area; a Designated Local Green Space

- **The development, by reason of the loss of Holybourne Play Area (a designated Local Green Space), would result in the loss of an extremely well-used and highly valued social and recreational facility at the heart of the village. The outstanding countryside views from Holybourne Play Area help connect the village to its rural landscape setting and are a particularly important aspect of the Local Green Space designation.**
 - **The NPPF sets out that 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. The NPPF is explicit in that once designated, boundaries of designated Local Green Spaces should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans – not through speculative planning applications.**
 - **The proposed replacement represents a significant diminishment in quality and community value. It will be enclosed by, and intrinsically linked to, the residents of the newly created neighbourhood; rather than serving as a notable facility for the wider village with outstanding countryside views.**
 - **Where the development fails to protect an asset afforded particular importance in the NPPF there is strong reason to refuse the application. NPPF Policy 11d(i), JCS Policies CP1, CP16 and CP17 and Alton Neighbourhood Plan Policy CH5 all direct refusal of the application.**
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Holybourne Play Area is a village facility and is openly accessible to all. It benefits from outstanding countryside views that connect it to the wider landscape setting and which help define the rural character of the village. It provides value to the health and well-being of the community by being set apart from the existing housing nearby. It serves as a safe common ground where villagers come together, fostering social interactions and community bonding. People meet here, share conversations, and build connections. This sense of community is invaluable for combating feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially in a village setting.

The Alton Neighbourhood Plan identifies Holybourne Play Area as:

“The only publicly accessible recreational area near the centre of the village from which to enjoy nature and admire the outstanding views northwards to Holybourne Down, the nearest alternative play area being a mile away. It holds particular significance for its local community, including children from several



local schools, and the many visitors with families and groups of all ages taking advantage of adjacent free parking.”



Development Plan Policy

Holybourne Play Area is a designated Local Green Space under Policy CH5 of the adopted Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Joint Core Strategy Policy CP1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development) sets out that even where the relevant policies of the development plan are out of date at the time of decision making, those specific policies in the NPPF which indicate that development should be restricted will continue to hold significant weight. The NPPF Policies referred to in JCS CP1 explicitly include those that relate to the protection of land designated as Local Green Space.

Policy CH5 of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan designates and therefore protects valued areas of Local Green Space from development, except in very special circumstances. This policy is aligned with East Hampshire JCS policies CP1, CP16 (Protection of Social Infrastructure) and CP17 (Protection of Open Space, Sport and Recreation).

The areas of Local Green Space identified in the Neighbourhood Plan for protection have all been found to meet the specific tests which are set out within the NPPF; namely they are close to where people live, special to local people and only constitute



local areas of land. Moreover, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies that whilst new development will need to meet the open space needs of the new residents, “it is equally important that existing public open spaces are retained”.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

NPPF Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making this means where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides strong reasons for refusing the development. In this regard, designated Local Green Spaces are explicitly identified as protected areas/assets of particular importance.

NPPF paragraph 106 sets out that “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”... and that... **“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”.**

At paragraph 108, the NPPF states that decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of the Framework. Chapter 13 sets out the following:

- The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts (vis-a-vis Local Green Spaces) – NPPF paragraph 142; and
- **Once established, Green Belt (vis-à-vis Local Green Space) boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans** – NPPF paragraph 145.

Proposed Replacement

The existing Local Green Space is demonstrably a significantly important and valued village facility, openly accessible to all. It is used extensively by villagers and attracts visitors from wider afield who appreciate the open countryside views and take advantage of the adjacent free parking. The designated Local Green Space would be lost as a result of the development.

The replacement open spaces proposed under the development proposals will, by contrast, be enclosed by, and intrinsically linked to, the residents of the newly created “neighbourhood”. The spaces will not benefit from the outstanding countryside views and the wider community/village will not have the same sense of access and



'ownership' of the spaces as it does with the existing Play Area on London Road. Rather than providing a space for the whole community, its main purpose would be to soften and buffer the development in views from London Road and New Lane. In recreational terms, it would predominantly benefit future residents of the application scheme rather than providing a notable facility for the wider village as the existing Local Green Space does.

Conclusion

Holybourne Play Area has been identified as an asset of particular importance to the community; such importance as has warranted its designation as a Local Green Space. Under the NPPF, Local Green Spaces are afforded equivalent protection to that of Green Belt. NPPF Paragraph 145 is explicit in that once established, boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans – not through ad hoc speculative planning decisions on individual development sites.

Moreover, the development fails to protect an asset afforded particular importance in the framework and development plan such that there is strong reason to refuse the application. NPPF Policy 11d, JCS Policies CP1, CP16 and CP17 and Alton Neighbourhood Plan Policy CH5 are all engaged and all direct refusal of the application.