

| <b>Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <b>Meeting Date</b>                                     | 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Report Title</b>                                     | Local Green Space Assessments 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>EMT Lead</b>                                         | Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Head of Service</b>                                  | Joanne Johnson – Head of Place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>                                     | Christopher Mansfield – Planning Officer (Policy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Classification</b>                                   | <b>Open</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Recommendations</b>                                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the comments received to the recent technical consultation and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings; and</li> <li>2. To note the Local Green Spaces Evidence Base Report and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.</li> </ol> |

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Whilst the Local Plan is emerging, there is an opportunity to designate new Local Green Spaces (LGS) in addition to those designated within Bearing Fruits Local Plan. This is in line with paragraph 106 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which provides the guidance for designation of land as local green spaces through Local Plans.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present (1) the comments received to the recent technical consultation with Town and Parish Councils which members of PTPWG requested when this piece of evidence was presented to them on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and (2) the updated assessment of Local Green Spaces for noting and inclusion as part of the evidence base supporting the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan includes a draft Policy INF4 Local Green Spaces which sets out the Local Plan's approach to Local Green Spaces. Upon adoption, the Local Plan will rely on the Local Green Space assessment document which will contain the list of designated Local Green Spaces sites.
- 1.4 After the assessments this will be put forward and consulted on through the Regulation 19 process.
- 1.5 The NPPF guidelines are that the approach to Local Green Spaces should be consistent with national policy for Green Belt land.

## **2 Background, Context and Proposals**

- 2.1 The designation of land as a Local Green Space allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. The NPPF at the time of the call for sites referenced in section 2.3 set out the main criteria for such spaces as:
- In reasonable close proximity to the community it serves;
  - Demonstrably special to a local community and hold particular local significance; and
  - Local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- 2.2 There has been a slight modification of the criteria in the latest version of the NPPF 2024 (paragraph 107) with bullet point two now more specific and including the sentence '*for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife*'.
- 2.3 A call for sites was carried out in 2020 and new sites were assessed based on the criteria set out in the NPPF. The sites and assessments were presented to the now decommissioned Local Plan Panel where they were noted and delegation was given to the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the member and deputy cabinet member for Planning to agree proposed Local Green Spaces for inclusion in the then draft Local Plan. This recommendation was later agreed at Cabinet. The work on Local Green Spaces was put on hold due to changes to the Local Plan timetable in 2021. Since then, there has been changes to the NPPF and sites, existing and newly submitted, were assessed in 2025 against paragraph 107 of the new NPPF 2024. As part of the plan making process and in preparation for the Council's Regulation 19 consultation in the summer, this work has been brought to members now.
- 2.4 There are 112 Local Green Spaces designated in Local Plan Bearing Fruits, which were going to be carried forward to the new local plan if they continued to meet the criteria to be designated as Local Green Spaces. As part of preparations for the Swale Local Plan Review, a Local Green Space Call for Sites was undertaken in August/September 2020 where 158 sites were put forward. 32 of these were already existing Local Green Spaces and three were later withdrawn leaving 123 sites to move forward to be assessed.
- 2.5 Of the remaining 123 sites, 29 have been considered to meet all the criteria and are proposed for Local Green Space designation. 94 sites were considered not to meet all the criteria and therefore are not proposed for Local Green Space designation (Appendices I and II).
- 2.6 All the 112 existing Local Green Spaces were reassessed, and one was proposed for de-designation (Appendix III).
- 2.7 At the Planning and transportation Working Group on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026, members raised a number of points regarding the Local Green Spaces Assessment Report. This included sites noted within the wrong wards, uncertainty on which Maylam

Gardens site was being assessed, to reconsider sites and to consult Town and Parish Councils on these sites on technical grounds.

- 2.8 Officers have considered these points and sites are now included in the correct wards and the map of Maylam Gardens in the document has now been ammended to show just the site that is being assessed. Officers are confident that their assessments of the following sites are in line with the NPPF:

- Land at Bapchild;
- Land west of farm cottages;
- The Queenborough Lines;
- Beachfields; and
- Land between the A2 and Grove Park Avenue, Sittingbourne

- 2.9 Following the technical consultation with Town and Parish Councils the Council received six responses three from members and three from Parish and Town Councils. Responses were mainly inquiries for proposing new Local Green Spaces. Comments and officers' response are set out in Appendix IV.

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 To note the comments received to the recent technical consultation and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings and;
- 3.2 To note the Local Green Spaces Evidence Base Report and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

- 4.1 The alternative option is that the Local Green Space Assessments is not noted by members. However, this is not recommended as the sites submitted need to be progressed through the Local Plan process and this represents an appropriate opportunity to acknowledge cherished local areas.

### **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 The Local Green Spaces assessments went out to members and Parish and Town Councils for technical consultation.
- 5.2 These sites will be part of the Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation where there will be an opportunity for all stakeholders to comment on them.

### **6 Implications**

| Issue | Implications |
|-------|--------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Corporate Plan                                               | <p>The Local Plan aligns with priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community - To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.</li> <li>• Environment - To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.</li> </ul> |
| Financial, Resource and Property                             | The Local Plan work programme is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement                             | Preparation of a Local Plan is carried out under a national legislative and regulatory framework.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Crime and Disorder                                           | There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency                 | As part of the Local Plan, there will be a sustainability appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment at each key stage in decision making and these assess the environmental impact of the Local Plan as a whole.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Health and Wellbeing                                         | The Local Green Spaces help promote health and wellbeing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | No implications identified at this stage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety                        | No implications identified at this stage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Equality and Diversity                                       | No implications identified at this stage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Privacy and Data Protection                                  | No implications identified at this stage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Local Government Reorganisation                              | The current Local Plan timetable expects the Local Plan to be submitted for its Examination in Public and to be adopted before local government reorganisation is expected to be complete.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Local Green Space Evidence Base Report

- Appendix II: Local Green Space Assessment
- Appendix III: Local Green Space De-designation Assessment
- Appendix IV: Comments received to the Technical Consultation and Officers' Response

## **8 Background Papers**

(Public Pack)[Agenda Document for Local Plan Panel, 29/10/2020 19:00](#) and [Minutes](#) from Extraordinary, Local Plan Panel - Thursday, 29 October 2020 7.00 pm.

(Public Pack)[Agenda Document for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group, 12/03/2026 19:00](#) and [Minutes Template](#) from Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group – Thursday, 12 March 2026 7.00 pm.