



# Okeford Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031

## *Local Green Space Report*

Prepared by the Okeford Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on behalf of the  
Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 National planning guidance (see 1.2 below) makes clear that, through neighbourhood plans, local communities can identify green spaces for special protection (where new development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances) which will endure well beyond the end of the plan period. Identifying land as a Local Green Space (LGS) should therefore not undermine the potential to provide sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services in the longer term.

This document therefore provides the evidence to justify why the Local Green Spaces are special to the local community and hold a particular local significance for this neighbourhood plan area.

It also reviews (as set out in 1.3 below) those sites included in the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP) 2003 as Important Open/Wooded Areas (IOWA) for inclusion as LGS. And also lists other sites that were identified and considered, but were not felt to justify a local green space designation, and why.

### 1.2 The NPPF states

“ Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore 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 reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

77 The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The 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), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

78 Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.”

### 1.3 The NDLP 2011-31 states that

‘Policy 1.9: Important Open or Wooded Areas (IOWA) of the 2003 Local Plan has been saved. The IOWA policy protects the site from development. However, at the examination of the

adopted 2003 Local Plan the Inspector recommended a review of IOWA designations, particularly their contribution in visual or amenity terms to the public areas within a town or village, with a view to deleting those which did not require complete protection. This review will be undertaken through this neighbourhood plan.

## **2.0 Review of Important Open or Wooded Areas**

The North Dorset District Wide Local Plan 2003 identified a number of IOWAs, and these are shown in the map at Appendix 1 and listed below.

- (1) Playing Field to the rear of 34 Lower Street (also known as Bowey Playing Field)
- (2) Playing Field to the rear of Okeford Fitzpaine School
- (3) St Andrews Churchyard
- (4) Land to the west of Back Lane
- (5) Land to the rear of 29 Nether Mead

Consideration has been given as to which of these should be retained as Local Green Space, and the justification for those retained is shown in Section 4.0 Okeford Fitzpaine Local Green Space. Those that have been excluded from Local Green Space designation are:

- (1) Playing Field to the rear of Okeford Fitzpaine School

The LGS designation is necessarily highly restrictive of future use and/or development of land. This may create unnecessary difficulties in future planning for the use of the Okeford Fitzpaine School site and has been excluded for this reason.

- (2) St Andrews Churchyard

The St. Andrews Churchyard land is already heavily protected by the Church of England as consecrated ground. It is also further protected by being within the Conservation Area and being within the curtilage of the Listed church building. For these reasons no further designation in the Neighbourhood Plan is considered necessary.

- (3) Land to the West of Back Lane

In the years following the publication of the 2003 NDLP this land was subject to a number of planning applications – in spite of the IOWA status. By the time the North Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2012 was produced, this land had been included in the SHLAA as a development site (referred to in the SHLAA as Land adj. to Myrtle Cottage Back Lane). Prior to publication of this Local Green Space Report, part

of this land had already been built on with a single dwelling infill. This progression from IOWA to built land causes the Land to the West of Back Lane to be removed from further consideration as LGS.

It should be noted that the IOWA status of these parcels of land remains unchanged until the NDLP makes this change.

### **3.0 Other Land considered for inclusion as Local Green Space (LGS)**

IOWAs were restricted to land within a Settlement Boundary as land outside was considered as Countryside where development was already restricted and controlled by policies within a Local Plan. However there are circumstances where this land in the Countryside might be used for development e.g. A Rural Exception Site such as Ridouts in Okeford Fitzpaine, which would make land outside the Settlement Boundary vulnerable to future development. Because an LGS can be used for important land close to a settlement (see 1.2 above) the LGS provides a mechanism for greater protection of land of importance to the community it serves.

There were 3 candidates for 'Other Land considered for inclusion as LGS:

#### **(1) The Recreation Ground Castle Lane**

Home of Okeford Fitzpaine FC for more than a century, the Recreation Ground has been central to recreation in Okeford Fitzpaine village. In addition to the football pitches and pavilion buildings there is also a children's play area. For these reasons the land was considered a strong candidate for LGS status. The decision to exclude it was based on:

- The land is owned by the Parish Council
- The land has National Playing Fields status which brings its own level of protection
- The Recreation Ground is being proposed for improvement to amenities with the use of Section 106 monies from the Old Dairy development. The improvements to amenities might include floodlit tennis courts, a Multi -Use Games Area (MUGA), and possibly other sports. The LGS designation may serve to hamper the addition of these amenities.

#### **(2) The Allotments (off Back Lane)**

The allotment land is owned by St. Mary Estate, held in trust, and rented by the Parish Council on an annual basis. The land is adjacent to but outside the Settlement Boundary. The combination of its location in the Countryside and the trust status of the land led to the decision to exclude this from LGS status.

#### **(3) Land adjacent to 11 Mary Gardens**

This Land has been the subject of planning applications in the past few years and as it meets the criteria for LGS has been included in Section 4 Okeford Fitzpaine Local Green Space. A request has been sent to the chair of North Dorset County Council (the landowner) for this parcel of land to be sold to the Parish Council for a nominal sum, so that the parish can take responsibility for its future maintenance. This report will be updated when a response has been received.

## **Section 4 Okeford Fitzpaine Local Green Space**

The NDDC Guidance note Local Green Space sets out the following process for designating a Local Green Space, and this has been used in the preparation of this document.

Process of designating a Local Green Space
Step 1: Identify green areas (use existing evidence or local nominations)
Step 2: Assess green areas (using the template form to carry out an assessment)
Step 3: Identify & contact landowners
Step 4: Map preferred sites & draft a policy
Step 5: Consult the community on the proposed designations (pre-submission consultation)
Step 6: Submission (amend sites or policy in response to consultation and submit final version of the plan to North Dorset District Council)

A template has been prepared and shown in Appendix 3 for each of the designated Local Green Space areas:

- (1) Playing Field to the rear of 34 Lower Street
- (2) Land to the rear of 29 Nether Mead
- (3) Land adjacent to 11 Mary Gardens

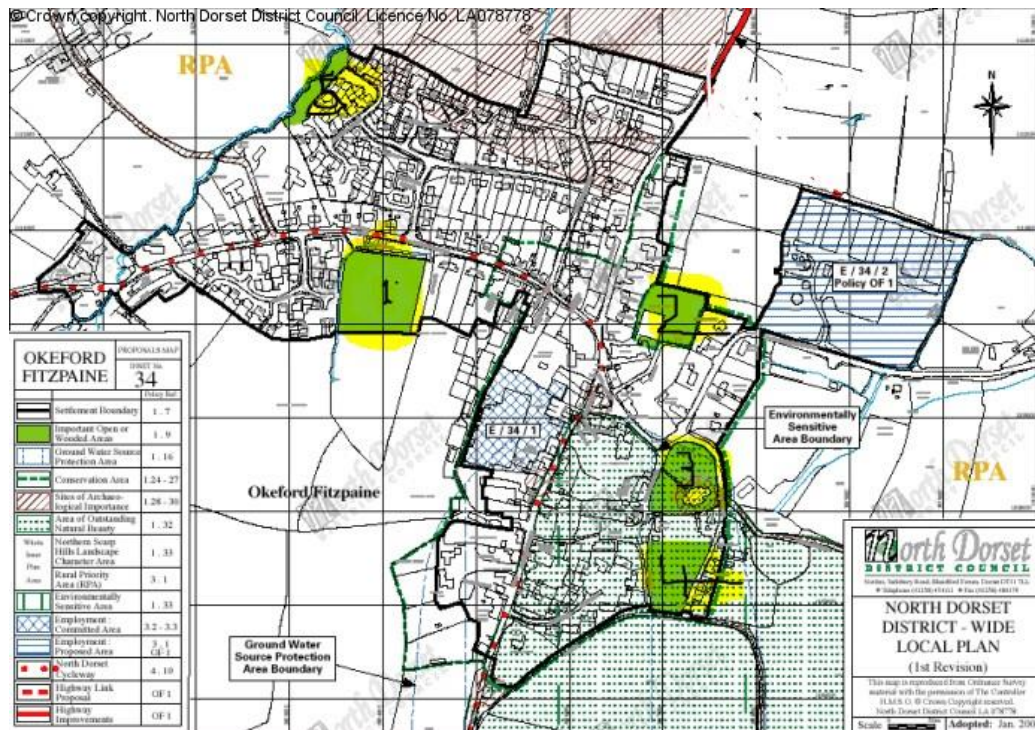
## **Section 5 Okeford Fitzpaine Green Corridor**

Okeford Fitzpaine is a compact, closely built village with the majority of the Local Green Space and IOWAs on the periphery of the village, as can be seen in Appendix 1 IOWAs.

Appendix 2 shows the green corridor around the Settlement Boundary and its linkage to the surrounding countryside. The green corridor is created through a circuit of easily accessible footpaths around the village, which link the IOWAs, the LGS, and other greenspaces (e.g. allotments), which then links to a network of footpaths, bridleways and minor roads for access to the surrounding countryside. This includes to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Southern section of the Parish, to the nearby Site of Special Scientific Interest Piddles Wood (in Sturminster Newton Parish), and to the Trailway via Little Lane to Shillingstone. Additional Rights of Way provide access to other settlements – Sturminster Newton, Shillingstone, Belchalwell.

Dorset Explorer has been used to source information on each of the proposed Local Green Spaces.

## Appendix 1 Okeford Fitzpaine Important Open/Wooded Areas 2003



## Appendix 2 Circuit of Footpaths providing a Green Corridor around Settlement



## Appendix 3 Designated Local Green Space Areas

### Local Green Space 1 Bowey Field

Code	Criteria	Space Details
SD1	Name of the Space	Playing Fields rear 34 Lower St (Bowey Field)
SD2	Space description/Location	0.32 hectares approx. E380394/N11038
SD3	Has a map of the space been provided?	Yes
Code	Criteria	Explanation/Policy Prompt
1.1	Land is not subject of a planning permission for development.	Yes
1.2	Space is not allocated or proposed for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan.	Yes
1.3	The space is not an extensive tract of land and is local in character	Yes
1.4	The space is within close proximity of the community it serves	Yes
1.5	The space is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular local significance.	Yes
Code	Criteria	Explanation of Why Special to Local Community
2.1	Landscape quality/significance	
2.2	The proposed space is of particular local historic significance	

2.3	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its recreational value	The space is central to where the majority of the village reside, forms the village green and provides a children's play area and open space for informal sports
2.4	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its tranquility/wildlife	



### Ecological Summary of Bowey Field

This is an area of improved grasslands currently managed by tight mowing as amenity grassland. There is little of wildlife significance here apart from the boundary hedges. This area of Local Green Space (along with some of the IOWAs) have potential for biodiversity enhancement particularly by leaving some areas as tall grassland (as buffer strips along hedges) that are only cut on rotation once a year. Some villages have areas of wild plants sown along the verges, including meadow plants and former farmland plants (such as corn cockle, poppy, marigold etc.) that provide colourful displays within the village; this could be done in Okeford Fitzpaine. Areas of tall sward grassland are greatly beneficial to butterflies, small mammals and reptiles and therefore feeding birds including owls.

Ownership Statement: Bowey Field

Bowey Field is owned by the Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council, which supports its designation as Local green Space

#### Local Green Space 2 Land to the Rear 29 Nether Mead

Code	Criteria	Space Details
SD1	Name of the Space	Land to the Rear 29 Nether Mead
SD2	Space description/Location	0.1544 hectares. E380328/N111251
SD3	Has a map of the space been provided?	Yes
Code	Criteria	Explanation/Policy Prompt
1.1	Land is not subject of a planning permission for development.	Yes
1.2	Space is not allocated or proposed for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan.	Yes
1.3	The space is not an extensive tract of land and is local in character	Yes
1.4	The space is within close proximity of the community it serves	Yes
1.5	The space is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular local significance.	Yes

Code	Criteria	Explanation of Why Special to Local Community
2.1	Landscape quality/significance	Provides important woodland screening between the urban development of the village and the surrounding countryside. Connects to further woodland adjacent to Dark Knoll Brook and provides a green corridor alongside the Brook.
2.2	The proposed space is of particular local historic significance	
2.3	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its recreational value	The space is used as an informal play area offering an adventure element to play and nature exploration.
2.4	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its tranquility/wildlife	A public right of way runs along the North of the Brook at this point connecting to the circuit of footpaths around the village. The woodland enhances the footpath and provides a quiet route for most of the year past the urban village area on the South bank beyond the woodland



### Ecological Summary Land to the Rear 29 Nether Mead

This is in part an area of improved grasslands currently managed by tight mowing as amenity grassland. The exception is a strip of land north of Nether Mead that forms the bank of the Dark Knoll Brook. The brooks, like Dark Knoll, that drain from the north side of the chalk hills to the south, have similarities: deeply cut and shaded by native trees with limited aquatic bank plants. They are good for hedgerow birds, including the less frequent marsh tit *Poecile palustris*, and will support a range of aquatic invertebrates, and possibly water vole, and also provide animals such as grass snakes with a corridor that provides access to the wider countryside.

### Ownership Statement: Land to the Rear 29 Nether Mead

North Dorset District Council own this area of Local Green Space, and have confirmed that they support the designation (M Coker 22.12.16).

### Local Green Space 3 Land at 11 Mary Gardens

Code	Criteria	Space Details
SD1	Name of the Space	Land adjacent to 11 Mary Gardens
SD2	Space description/Location	0.795 Hectares. E380490/N11186
SD3	Has a map of the space been provided?	No

Code	Criteria	Explanation/Policy Prompt
1.1	Land is not subject of a planning permission for development.	Yes
1.2	Space is not allocated or proposed for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan.	Yes
1.3	The space is not an extensive tract of land and is local in character	Yes
1.4	The space is within close proximity of the community it serves	Yes
1.5	The space is demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular local significance.	Yes
Code	Criteria	Explanation of Why Special to Local Community
2.1	Landscape quality/significance	
2.2	The proposed space is of particular local historic significance	Site of an old orchard
2.3	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its recreational value	The land is used as a play area for young children from the adjacent housing, where those children are too young to cross a busy road to Bowey Field and need to be supervised in sight of parents

2.4	The proposed space is of particular local significance because of its tranquility/wildlife	
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#### Ecological Summary Land at 11 Mary Gardens

This is improved grassland that is currently managed by tight mowing. It was previously the site of an old orchard and subject to the consent of the owners could be restored as a small area of fruit trees. The small size of the site restricts the usage beyond the current informal play area.

#### Ownership Statement: Land at 11 Mary Gardens

North Dorset District Council own this area of Local Green Space, and have made a number of planning applications to build a small number of houses. Each of these planning applications has been rejected, as the proposals have been strongly objected to by the Parish Council and local residents. This rejection has been based on the reason that factually incorrect information has been presented in support of the planning applications, and that the housing need for Okeford Fitzpaine can be fully met by the 3 allocated sites in the Okeford Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan, and unlimited infill development elsewhere within the revised settlement boundary. As a result the Parish Council proposes purchase of this land from NDDC at a nominal price.