

LOCAL GREEN SPACES IN HISTON & IMPINGTON

INFORMATION ON SITE: “Northern Buxhall Farm”

Version 3 June 2019

INTRODUCTION

This template is for the compilation of information relevant to the designation of a particular site as a Local Green Space (LGS) in the Histon & Impington Neighbourhood Plan. It serves to inform decisions about LGS designation, to provide supporting evidence to the District planning authorities and to inform specific policies and management plans for the site. It is based on the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and draws on other guidance documents, as explained in the Histon and Impington LGS Framework paper. It is organised into sections, as listed below, but most sites will be significant for only a couple of the criteria covered.

1. General Information
2. Planning history and legal status
3. Size, scale and “local nature”
4. Need for and proximity/accessibility of Local Green Space
5. Evidence that it “is demonstrably special to a local community”
6. Evidence that it “holds particular local significance for its beauty or tranquillity”
7. Evidence that it “holds particular local significance for its historical or cultural value”
8. Evidence that it “holds particular local significance for its recreational value”
9. Evidence that it “holds particular local significance for the richness of its wildlife”
10. Evidence that it holds particular local significance for other ecosystem services
11. Evidence about the site’s connectivity to other green areas for ecological or recreational purposes
12. Evidence that the green space holds particular local significance for any other reason

REFERENCE NUMBER OF THIS LOCAL GREEN SPACE = V4

WORKING NAME OF THIS LOCAL GREEN SPACE = “Northern Buxhall Farm”

DATE of most recent amendment / addition to the dossier = 3 June 2019

IN A NUTSHELL (recommend up to 100 words), the case for this Local Green Space:

This area is arable agricultural land, hedgerows and ditches, which until recently was part of the EU Stewardship scheme with public access granted. It is used daily by villagers for walking, running, cycling, horse riding and dog walking and offers spectacular views all the way across to Ely Cathedral. It supports a wealth of biodiversity, which has been frequently highlighted in a local naturalist’s blog. The drainage ditches, hedgerows and open fields are populated with multiple species of mammals (fox, hare, roe deer, badger) and birds of conservation significance (corn bunting, reed bunting, yellowhammer, linnets, skylark, yellow wagtail, barn owl, golden plover, bullfinch, song thrush, common whitethroat, chiffchaff, blackcap, house sparrow). The drainage ditches are a repository for wild flowers and insects including moths (brimstone moth, privet hawk moth), butterflies (gatekeeper, small tortoiseshell, small skipper, red admiral, speckled wood, common blue, holly blue, brown argus, peacock), wasps, bees (bumble bee species including tree bumble bee, buff tailed bumble bee, common carder) and predatory insects such as damselfly and dragonflies (common darter, migrant hawk). The site provides connectivity with other green areas to the east, north and west of the village and is a valuable resource for recreation and wildlife.

Contributors to this dossier (with initials to facilitate reference in the sources column):

All inputs are by first contributor, except where indicated otherwise

Finn Holding (FH)

Robert Bensted-Smith (RBS)

	STATEMENTS ABOUT EACH TOPIC	EVIDENCE / SOURCES
		What evidence supports statement? References? Also provide the initials of the contributor and other relevant people for follow-up queries.
1	GENERAL INFORMATION	
1.1	Name(s) and location/address of site. <i>Some sites have several names, in which case mention all known names.</i>	
	Northern Buxhall Farm It comprises the strip joining Cottenham Road to Buxhall Farm and the field and hedgerows extending north-eastwards from that track up to the ditch by the farm buildings (about 12 ha)	
1.2	Site location map(s) and photographs <i>The plan can be at any scale but must show location and boundaries of the site. Indicate the scale. Add explanatory text about site location and boundaries in box below.</i>	Has a map been provided? YES Have photos been provided? YES Attach the map(s) and photo(s) separately.
	Buxhall Farm is to the north-east of the village on the eastern side of the B1049. Youngman Avenue constitutes the southern border with Mill Lane to the east. The northern boundaries are agricultural and other non-farmed green areas which augment the biodiversity of the area.	On attached map, the proposed LGS comprises the section of Buxhall Farm outlined in red.
1.3	Ownership of site Information on land ownership can be obtained from the Land Registry or local knowledge.	
	Ownership of Buxhall Farm is by Cambs County Council and the land is leased to a tenant farmer, Peter Freeman.	
1.4	Is the owner aware of the potential designation as LGS? Do they support the designation? <i>Support is highly desirable, but it is possible for a site to be designated as a LGS, even if there are objections from the site owners.</i>	
	Yes. The County Council opposes LGS designation, as it would like to develop housing on this land and questions whether the site meets LGS criteria. The farmer's main interest is to continue his farming practices and, provided that is the case, he has no objection to LGS status. In conversations the team confirmed to him that his farming practices are compatible with LGS status – indeed, those practices (and his tolerance of walkers) have contributed to the biodiversity and other values which make this site special for the community. Indeed, the regular occurrence since 2015 of the threatened	

	Yellowhammer is testament to this.	
1.5	Organisation(s) or individual(s) proposing the site for LGS designation <i>e.g. the Parish Council itself, a specific community group, or an informal group of residents</i>	
	H&I Parish Council	
1.6	Community served by the candidate LGS <i>Does the site serve the whole village or a particular geographic sector of it or a particular interest group?</i>	
	The site is most heavily used by residents of the northern half of Histon & Impington. Nevertheless, people come from all over H&I, because of the outstanding opportunities for recreational activities (walking, running, dog walking and horse riding) and fine views.	RBS
2	PLANNING HISTORY AND LEGAL STATUS	
2.1	Is there currently a planning application for this site? If permitted, could part of the overall site still be used as a Local Green Space?	
	An application for housing development was rejected in 2014. No current planning applications for the site exist. A planning application for a school on the southern part of the farm, i.e. adjacent to the LGS, is imminent.	RBS
2.2	Is the site currently allocated for development in the draft Neighbourhood Plan? If development were permitted, could part of the overall site still be used as a Local Green Space?	
	There have been several discussions about allocating part of Buxhall Farm for construction of a new Junior School. If this were to be permitted, then the school facilities and sports grounds could be in the south-western section of the property, outside the proposed LGS, while the LGS section could be managed to enhance its biodiversity and recreational values. The school would enjoy a fine natural environment with fantastic outdoor educational opportunities and this would offset the loss of open green space for the community.	RBS
2.3	Does the site have any existing legal protection of any kind and since when? Or has it ever been proposed for legal protection? <i>e.g. Local Nature Reserve, Village Green, land designated as open access in agreement with the landowner. Also Protected Village Amenity Area PVAA, which is similar to LGS but not as strong in restricting development.</i>	South Cambs PVAA - LGS Right of way and open access land - GOV.UK Cambridgeshire LNR Open Spaces Society describes options www.oss.org.uk

	The site is all Green Belt land. It has previously been part of the EU countryside stewardship scheme, which supported biodiversity-friendly land management and public access.	
3.	SIZE, SCALE AND “LOCAL NATURE” OF CANDIDATE LGS	
3.1	Area of proposed site (preferably in hectares)	(No fixed limits. Cotswold District suggests an upper limit of 20ha for LGS designation.)
	Approximately 12 hectares of Buxhall Farm (the farm is 26 ha in total).	
3.2	Is the site an “extensive tract of land”? Extensive tracts can’t be designated as LGS but “extensive” is not defined. How large is it in comparison to other groups of fields or areas of land in the vicinity? Does it feel like a local H&I site or something on a larger scale?	
	No. It is less than half of Buxhall Farm and is adjacent to thousands of hectares of arable land, stretching far into the distance, north and east of H&I. Thus, in a wide rural landscape it is just a small piece that is of special value to the community.	RBS
3.3	What makes the site “local in character”? <i>How does the site connect physically, ecologically, visually and socially to the local area?</i>	To avoid repetition you may be able to simply refer to other sections of this template e.g. on recreation.
	The site is bordered on three sides, at least partially, by residential areas (see attached map and satellite image) with easy pedestrian access from various points. Hundreds of H&I residents use the site, drawn by its rich wildlife and the beautiful views to the north (Cottenham church and Ely Cathedral are both visible). It has long been a favourite area for the community to walk, watch birds on the field and enjoy the feeling of being in a farming landscape. The latter is part of the essential character of the village, which is the top priority emerging from the big community survey central to the Neighbourhood Plan. This site was also in the top three favourite sites of the community, along with the Village Green and Manor Park Field (i.e. the community orchard). Its popularity was reinforced by the period under the EU stewardship scheme. Though the scheme has sadly lapsed, the popularity endures. When the new school is built, this LGS will be where the children of H&I enjoy proximity to nature and to farming and agricultural production, both vital to their education and mental health as well as strengthening their connection to the character of the village.	RBS

4.	NEED FOR AND PROXIMITY / ACCESSIBILITY OF GREEN SPACE	
4.1	Is there a particular need for a Local Green Space in this location? <i>e.g. is there a shortage of accessible green space in this location? Has the need been identified in other assessments or surveys?</i>	Make this specific. General shortage in H&I is described in the NP and in the framework document.
	In the context of the extreme shortage of publicly accessible, open green space in H&I, Buxhall Farm	RBS
	represents the only accessible (by permission of CCC) green space in the north-east of the village.	
4.2	How far is the site from the community it serves? <i>It should be in "reasonably close proximity" but this is not defined.</i>	It may be helpful to attach a map or diagram showing proximity and access.
	The area is adjacent to the village, with several pedestrian access point. Many homes are within walking distance and the farm is only 800m from the Village High Street. If the Junior School were to be developed, this would increase the number of people who come into the immediate vicinity of the LGS every day.	RBS
4.3	Are there any barriers to the community accessing the site from their homes? If so, how could they be overcome? <i>e.g. a busy road to be crossed</i>	
	Access from Mill Lane involves no barriers. Access from the west side may require crossing the B1049, although most users would come along the foot/cycle path that runs along the eastern edge of that road. In the event that the suggested Junior School development proceeds, access to the location by bike or foot would necessarily be made entirely safe.	RBS
5.	EVIDENCE THAT IT IS SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY	
5.1	List the community organisations, societies, local leaders, schools, organisations concerned with health and well-being, groups of residents or other groups, who have expressed support for the protection of this site?	Attach evidence, which could be letters of support, petitions, surveys, council resolutions etc.

	<p>Responses to the consultation and at the stand outside Tesco's during the consultation provide compelling evidence that people feel passionately about this place. They rate it alongside the Community Orchard/Histon Wood/Girton Wood complex as the most important green spaces in the Parish (after the Village Green), for practical uses, such as dog walking, for wildlife, and for reasons of mental well-being and connection with the rural farming landscape. The box in the main NP elaborates on these reasons.</p> <p>A previous proposal to develop housing on Buxhall Farm was strongly and successfully opposed in 2014 by the Histon and Impington Village Action Group (HAIVAG), which showed that the values of this piece of Green Belt land had been seriously underestimated by the developers and authorities.</p>	<p>See the box on this LGS in the main Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The HAIVAG representation to SCDC about Buxhall Farm in 2014.</p> <p>Consultation responses on-line and at the stand outside Tesco's.</p>
6.	EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR BEAUTY OR TRANQUILLITY	
6.1	Is this criterion relevant for this site?	If no, go on to the next section
	YES	
6.2	If yes, describe briefly the views and other characteristics that contribute to this beauty and/or tranquillity. Why do local people consider it to be of particular significance?	If possible, provide photographic or other evidence.
	<p>Extensive views as far as Ely Cathedral and access to the paths enables walking into the countryside well away from the sound of traffic; this is one of the very few places where the A14 traffic is not generally audible. Wildflowers such as cowslips are present in profusion along with mammals such as foxes, roe deer and hares, and skylark song is a major feature through the spring and summer. The blog Naturephile (https://thenaturephile.com/) has frequently featured Buxhall Farm.</p>	<p>Excerpts from The Naturephile blog, with photos and evocative writing about Buxhall Farm.</p>
7.	EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, SOCIAL OR EDUCATIONAL VALUE	H&I Historical Society could compile this section, where relevant.
7.1	Is this criterion relevant for this site?	If no, go on to the next section
	Yes	
7.2	Describe the associated historic buildings, memorials, gardens, landscape features (e.g. old hedgerows, trees or ponds), cultural activities or relevance to the historic development of the village (e.g. fruit and jam production).	If possible, provide references or other evidence.
	None	
7.3	Is the site used for educational purposes, either by schools or by other community groups?	

	Not currently. In the event that the Junior School is built on the southern half of Buxhall Farm, this LGS would be a hugely important educational resource, as well as a place for pupils and parents to enjoy the multiple benefits of regular experience of natural green space.	RBS
7.4	Does the site have other social uses, for example as an area where people get together, for example for picnics, communal children's play or teenage socialising? <i>Consider various age groups. For example, is it a site where young people hang out together or where older people meet up with friends.</i>	
	It is an area where local teenagers congregate and where families walk together.	
8.	EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR RECREATION	H&I Walking Group, Histon Hobblers, Cycling Group, youth groups and others could compile this section, where relevant.
8.1	Is this criterion relevant for this site?	If no, go on to the next section
	YES	
8.2	Is the site used for playing sport? <i>If so, which sports, involving which sections of the community? Since when has it been used for sport? Is it free or does it require club membership?</i>	
	No	
8.3	Is the public able to physically access the site? <i>e.g. public rights of way across or adjacent to the site. Has access been allowed hitherto on a discretionary basis? Is there access to the whole site or just part of it? Is there good disabled access? (A site can still be designated even if there is no public access).</i>	
	Footpaths and bridleways exist. Under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme there were formal permissive paths, with 8 miles of pathways around the farmland stretching to Cottenham and the Landbeach Road. Access is possible via two entry points on the B1049 and via Mill Lane.	RBS See attached map.
8.4	Is the site used for walking, dog-walking, foraging (berries etc), birding, nature observation, horse-riding, cycling, children's games or other informal recreation? <i>If so, how much is it used and by which parts of the community? Since when has it had these uses?</i>	
	The site is extensively used every day for multiple recreational activities: walking, dog-walking, cycling, horse-riding, birding, nature-watching and foraging for wild fruit (blackberries, sloes, plums).	

9.	EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR RICHNESS OF WILDLIFE	
9.1	Is this criterion relevant for this site?	If no, go on to the next section
	YES	
9.2	<p>What wildlife of interest to the community has been found on the site? <i>Include plants, fungi, mammals, birds, amphibians, invertebrates etc. Explain briefly the use of the site by the species concerned and the conservation requirements. Mention any population trends, supported by monitoring data or anecdotal evidence.</i></p>	Consider sightings within the past five years. To organise species information, a checklist of potential species will be made available. Additional species can be added, as needed. The checklist and other evidence should be provided as an attachment.
	<p>The drainage ditches, hedgerows and open fields are populated with multiple species of mammals, birds, wild flowers, trees and fungi. Foxes and hares breed there, roe deer are regularly sighted and there is evidence of badger activity. The drainage ditches are a repository for wild flowers (e.g. white dead nettle, stinging nettle, white campion, red clover, white clover, charlock, hogweed, pansy, hedgerow cranesbill, herb bennet, field poppy, hedge woundwort, field scabius, common vetch, cow parsley, birds foot trefoil etc.) and the insects that feed on and pollinate them including moths (brimstone moth, privet hawk moth etc.) , butterflies (e.g. gatekeeper, small tortoiseshell, small skipper, red admiral, speckled wood, common blue, holly blue, brown argus, peacock etc.), wasps, bees (bumble bee species including tree bumble bee, buff tailed bumble bee, common carder) and predatory insects including damsel and dragonflies (e.g. common darter, migrant hawkler).</p>	
9.3	<p>Are any of the habitats or species found on the site considered to be of special importance? <i>e.g. habitats or species in national or regional lists of priorities or in a biodiversity action plan. Explain briefly the use of the site by the species concerned and the conservation requirements, if not already covered above.</i></p>	For national and county priority species, see CPbiodiversity . Consider sightings within the past five years. Elaborate further in an attachment, if necessary

	<p>Bird species of conservation significance include: corn bunting, reed bunting, yellowhammer, linnet, skylark, yellow wagtail, barn owl, golden plover, bullfinch, song thrush, common whitethroat, chiffchaff, blackcap, house sparrow. Many of these species including reed bunting, linnet, skylark, common whitethroat, barn owl and possibly others from this list also breed on and adjacent to the Buxhall Farm site.</p> <p>Flocks of over 50 Yellowhammers have been observed on the Buxhall Farm fields on several occasions each year since 2015, probably drawn by the favourable management of the farm by Mr Freeman. This is significant not just locally but for the wider region, because this species has drastically in the UK (20% decline in Eastern England between 1995 and 2010). Such large flocks are rarely seen. The Neighbourhood Plan team are currently comparing Buxhall data with other County-wide data on population size, flock sizes and trends.</p>	
9.4	<p>Are there trees with preservation orders in the site? If so, how many, which species and what special characteristics?</p>	<p>Parish Council tree warden could provide the information for this question. South Cambs Local Plan policy NH/7 (paras 6.32-6.33) on ancient woodlands and veteran trees is relevant on this question.</p>
	No	
9.5	<p>What has been the involvement of community members in studying, observing or simply enjoying the wildlife of this site?</p> <p><i>Have local people been monitoring the site or recording its species and, if so, for how long? Have they produced any data sets, articles, reports, blogs, talks, exhibits etc about any of the wildlife present at the site?</i></p>	<p>You could attach copies of materials produced, if appropriate.</p>
	<p>Finn Holding has intermittent records of the wildlife on Buxhall Farm going back to 2010 with spreadsheets of species observed and numerous blog posts on that area dating back to 2010 here: https://thenaturephile.com/</p> <p>In 2019 Finn Holding is continuing to conduct periodic surveys of birds at the site.</p>	<p>Detailed spreadsheets of data on birds and other species are available from Finn Holding. They were considered to be more detailed and umerous than necessary for uploading with this dossier.</p>
10.	EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR OTHER ECOSYSTEM SERVICES	<p>There is unlikely to be quantitative data on ecosystem services, but you can make qualitative arguments – as specific as possible. In some cases there may be supporting anecdotal evidence (e.g. of pollinator activity).</p>
10.1	<p>Is this criterion relevant for this site?</p>	<p>If no, go on to the next section</p>
	YES	

10.2	Does the site contribute significantly to flood prevention, absorption of rainwater or maintenance of water quality (by reducing run-off of silt, agrochemicals and other pollutants into water courses)? If so, describe briefly the function and how significant it is likely to be.	Attach supporting documents, diagrams etc, if needed.
	No. The area has standing water in most winters due to poor drainage despite being surrounded on most sides by drainage ditches.	Ecological report generated as part of the consultation to develop the site in 2014 appended.
10.3	Does the site provide significant habitat for pollinators or for predators valuable in controlling plant pests (especially if near allotments, orchards, gardens)? If so, describe briefly the pollinators and/or predators concerned.	Attach supporting documents, diagrams etc, if needed.
	Several common dragonfly species including common darter and migrant hawkers are present every summer as well as insectivorous birds. The area is also well populated by multiple bumble bee and fly species (see Section 9.2)	
10.4	Does the site contribute significantly as a barrier to noise pollution or air pollution, as a windbreak, or in maintaining a favourable microclimate (e.g. a moist, cool area during hot, dry periods)?	Attach supporting documents, diagrams etc, if needed.
	No	
11.	CONNECTIVITY TO OTHER GREEN AREAS	As explained in the Framework document, ecological connectivity is essential for long-term sustainability of the other local values, while connecting sites with vegetated paths greatly enhances recreational value.
11.1	Is this criterion relevant for this site?	If no, go on to the next section
	Yes. It is adjacent to extensive tracts of countryside stretching north, east and west providing connectivity for insect, bird and mammal species which is an essential attribute to enable the maintenance of sustainable populations.	
11.2	Is the site connected – or potentially connected – ecologically to other green areas? If so, which other areas? Which kinds of wildlife benefit from the connectivity? <i>The connectivity could be physically continuous, e.g. a hedgerow, or depend on sites being close enough for birds or insects to move between them. If the connectivity is weak or only potential, indicate briefly how it could be enhanced e.g. by restoring vegetation alongside a drainage ditch.</i>	Attach a map or diagram to illustrate the connectivity.
	Yes.	The Important Natural Habitat map in

	<p>The hedgerows, ditches and open landscape provide connectivity between Buxhall Farm and extensive areas of farmland. Patches of uncultivated habitat inter-linked by hedgerows and drainage ditches within the open arable land enable populations of many species to flourish, notably muntjac deer, roe deer, fox, badger, hare and multiple bird species including a significant number with red listed conservation status (see section 9.3).</p> <p>Although the B1049 is a barrier, there is connectivity for species of birds, insects and mammals, listed above, between this area and the open spaces to the north, north-west and east of H&I.</p>	<p>the main Neighbourhood Plan illustrates the connectivity.</p>
11.3	<p>Is the site connected – or potentially connected – for recreational purposes to other green areas? If so, which other areas and for which kinds of recreation? Which parts of the community use the connected green areas and how much?</p> <p><i>This will generally be about walking, dog-walking, running, horse-riding and cycling routes, which link green areas in a loop. If the connectivity is only potential, indicate briefly how it could be achieved e.g. by establishing an additional permissive way.</i></p>	<p>Attach a map or diagram to illustrate the connectivity, or simply cross-refer to the ecological connectivity, if the links are similar.</p>
	<p>Yes, it is regularly used by local groups and individuals as part of longer walking or cycling excursions. It is an important component of the Neighbourhood Plan provisions for walking and cycling.</p>	<p>RBS</p>
12.	<p>EVIDENCE OF ANY OTHER SPECIAL LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE</p>	
	<p>If there is any other special characteristic or local significance relevant to the site's designation as a Local Green Space but not covered above, please state it here.</p>	