

Area Green Space Plan - Horfield and Lockleaze

Consideration of the value of Wellington Hill Playing Field prior to identifying it in the Area Green Space Plan for potential disposal for development.

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Introduction

- The Parks and Green Space Strategy was adopted by Bristol City Council in February 2008 with a clear aim to improve the city's accessible green spaces - providing new facilities, providing them where they are needed across the city and arresting the decline resulting from decades of under investment.
- One of the funding methods adopted by the Strategy was to sell some green space and reinvest 70% of money raised back in to improving more important spaces.
- Area Green Space Plan ideas and options papers, currently out for consultation until October 29th 2010, identify where potential disposal spaces are.

How were potential disposal spaces identified:

- The Parks and Green Space Strategy set out how potential disposal spaces should be identified. The minimum open space provision standards adopted by the Strategy were applied and a range of value criteria also considered.
- The value criteria, as set out in the Strategy are given below:

Community value

This is an assessment of a site's value to the local community based on both feedback from local people and knowledge of changes taking place in the area.

Factor	Example of type of considerations
Level of use	Current use and potential for improved use
Community views of the space	Does the community think it's important and why? Views of different groups will be considered. Is there a sense of community ownership of the space?
Community involvement	Is there a group or potential group who are involved in the care of the site?
Equalities considerations	Does it have any features that are particularly important to specific equalities groups?
Educational significance	Is it currently used by schools? Is there the potential for it to act as an 'outdoor classroom'?
Demographic change	Could it meet the needs of any changes to the local population?
Level of anti-social behaviour	Does the space contribute to an ASB issue? How much does it affect the local community? Is it possible to reduce it?
Events	Does it hold events or could it?

Custodial value

These are values which are largely fixed and will only be affected by external influences such as new housing being built alongside. They are intrinsic values of the site

Factor	Example of type of considerations
Local context and significance	What other spaces there are nearby and how close? Would a community be disadvantaged if this space wasn't here? Is it a focus for the community? Is it a backland site?
Accessibility	How accessible is the site in terms of getting to it or around it? Is it part of a greenway/cycle route/PROW? Does the space offer opportunities for those with poor mobility which other spaces nearby don't, therefore disadvantaging them by its removal – particularly in terms of assessing its topography?
Landscape significance	To what degree does it contribute to urban landscape character? Does it contribute to important views and vistas both to and from it? Does it include water as a feature?
Nature conservation significance	Is it an important habitat? Is it protected or does it have protected species? Does it have veteran trees? Is it a wildlife corridor? Does it have a watercourse? Does it have geological interest?
Archaeological/Historical interest	Does it have any features of significance to the locality/city? Significant social link with the past? Is it protected or registered?
Legal status	Is it common land, village green or under an Act of Parliament?
Economic value	Does it contribute to or reduce property values? Does it add to economic regeneration?
Sustainability significance	Contribution to adaptation for climate change? Trees providing shade and temperature reduction? Good location to help control/ameliorate potential flooding?

Applying the value criteria

- The process identified 'low' value sites, not 'no' value sites. All sites are likely to have some value under the criteria set by the Strategy. With identified low value sites, some of course will be of lower / higher value than others.
- The value criteria were judged holistically. That is, if when considered together there is not enough evidence that the site is high value to preclude it from being recommended for consultation, then it can be included. Should further consultation reveal such information then it is possible to remove a site from consideration.
- It was clear that different values could be attached to different parts of green spaces and this has led to partial site disposals being put forward.
- A scoring mechanism or value threshold has not been used.
- The value assessment is informed by comment or observation from a range of council professionals. It isn't necessary to speak to all relevant officers in each case. Officers approached included planners, highways engineers, water/drainage engineers, ecologists, arboriculturalists, archaeologists, the council's legal team, landscape designers, urban designers, sports development workers, pollution control officers and play officers.
- The process and information used followed a similar approach to that used by Development Management to help determine planning applications. That is, existing information regularly brought to bear on planning and development decisions is also used here. For example, value was informed by whether the land is covered by a planning designation which itself recognises importance, such as Site of nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). An ecologists view is then sought.
- External stakeholders were also consulted including community members. Presentation of potential disposal sites to community stakeholders drew a cautious response with a reluctance amongst most, but not all, respondents to endorse disposals. Some had a clear 'no disposal' perspective and some felt that a debate needed to be had about subsequent investment.
- When considering comments from community stakeholders officers were looking for the importance and function of a site to be distinct and unique from those of other spaces in the local area.
- The process identified sites or parts of sites that were considered low value, recreational open space but which have not been identified as disposal sites. This can arise for example because sites are protected by Green Belt planning policy, are owned by a third party, are compromised by the presence of overhead or underground services or are protected by covenants.
- The development potential of disposal sites would need to be further established through development plan or development management processes - that is, further investigations might reveal that a site is not suitable for development. For example an intrusive ground survey might reveal ground conditions that make development not viable.
- The Strategy set out a policy to "Develop and redesign some backland sites to provide frontages of houses looking onto the site - in so doing create a community focal point and improve feelings of personal safety". In these instances a disposal is informed by a low value assessment but the backland principle is the overriding factor. The positive attributes of introducing limited, and controlled, development are well known and in one or two cases this positive benefit has been a strong factor in putting forward a partial disposal.

Wellington Hill Playing Field value assessment

This assessment was considered by Parks and Estates officers with input from officers from Strategic Planning Policy and Corporate Property Services. Its use was to aid discussion. It was used together with aerial and ground photographs and also GIS information which allows layers of information to be added or removed in real time on a projected site map.

On the basis of this information and the way it is applied, the PGSS Board made a decision that the site should go forward for consultation as a low value green space.

Area Green Space Plan - Value Assessment

Neighbourhood Partnership area: Horfield and Lockeaze
 Site name: Wellington Hill Playing Field

Value criteria	Evidence
Local context	The site is a sloping open space located close to the several open spaces that make up Horfield Common. It lies the other side of Concorde Lodge from the Ardagh / Common site. The site is a former playing field which under the aims of the Playing Pitch Strategy and the application of the long-term realistic Playing Pitch Model is no longer required for formal sport. The site is large enough to potentially cater for a range of activities including ball games. As use as a formal playing pitch is no longer required, all activities could be potentially be accommodated in the nearby space of Horfield Common. The space may be considered as backland but wide entrances from three directions do not make it feel as such. The space does not appear to be the focus of the community - this is a role most applicable to the nearby Ardagh / Common site. The site is adjacent to a local scout club on land leased by the city council. Wellington Hill Playing Fields is not required to meet the PGSS standards for quantity and access - now and for 2026 as elicited from the SHLAA and other AGSP land-use proposals.
Accessibility	The site is not part of a greenway/cycle way or PROW. It is sloping but level in some places and would provide for those with poor mobility. Other spaces nearby are similar.
Landscape significance	The site is not designated as a Prominent Green Hillside, landscape architect has not raised objections. There are view s from the space to the east. Note should be made of Urban Design Comment as part of Concorde Lodge Planning application which stated <i>"The siting and form of development has been the result of the need to retain the panoramic views from the adjacent public spaces of Horfield Common and Wellington Hill playing fields, and the unique vantage points upon which the public can experience the fantastic views across the north east of Bristol and towards Ashley Down and Purdown ridge. The common is a hugely important public space and that the views afforded through the site are of immense amenity value"</i> . The same advice would likely apply to and planning application on Wellington Hill. Planning at the Lodge was permitted. Strategic planning have not raised objections.
Nature conservation significance	The site is not subject to any planning designation relating to protection of wildlife. Ecologists have not raised objection.
Archaeological / historic interest	City Archaeologist has commented: <i>"Historically this site forms part of Horfield Common. The area of Horfield is known to have been occupied during the Roman period and the form of the Holy Trinity Church opposite suggests an early medieval date of origin. Recent archaeological work on this site has identified a medieval structure close to Wellington Hill. The full extent of this feature could not be ascertained, but the structure has been preserved insitu. It is likely that similar archaeology can be expected elsewhere on this site and extensive archaeological assessment and subsequent fieldwork would be required before the determination of any development proposals."</i>

Legal status	The land is not common land or village green. There are no legal barriers to disposal, the council holds the land title.
Economic value	There are no known economic regeneration implications.
Sustainability significance	The land does not contribute to Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3 - it will absorb rain and reduce run off. Strategic Planning have not raised objections on grounds of sustainability.
Level of use	Past resident observation informed that that the was used for ball games and dog walking and a regular stream of people pass through the site to Tesco Golden Hill. Parks Operations comment that use beyond dog-walkers use is very occasional - from scouts, cadets and keep fit. Used years ago by Manor Farm boys Club. Site not independently surveyed.
Community views of space	Low value session held 12.03.09 - two main comments given 1) " <i>Years ago there was a football pitch here, open days in the summer, fetes, fancy dress, events, fire engines brought up for the public to see - a whole series of events happened because essentially this is a good sheltered space surrounded by houses</i> ". 2) " <i>Now the football pitch has gone, the scout hut has gone - don't know why but the space is no longer used. It has the potential to be the way it was. Could it be demographic change? An ownership issue? It was owned by BCC leisure and education at different times - perhaps this was part of the cause? There is still a walkway used that goes right through the site.</i> " At investment session for Horfield Common few statements made about Wellington in relation to other spaces. Statements include: Should be a safe place for younger groups to use. Very well used for football. Needs levelling. Football posts. Natural boundary to protect residents. Multiple sports area. Put back the goalposts. Retain as open space. Plant trees around the boundary. Wildflower meadow / wildlife area. Use should compliment activities if adjacent scout group and play group
Community involvement	Friends of Horfield Common likely to take an interest in the site.
Equalities considerations	Site is accessible as are others nearby.
Educational significance	Local schools have noted pupil's use of Horfield Common - unclear what part of the Common were used. St Bonaventures may be interested in Horfield Common if wildlife interest. Ashley Down Infants use Common 'maybe once a year' for sports.
Level of ASB	No known ASB, not mentioned by Police.
Events	Has been used for events in the past. Could continue to accommodate local events.