

Gedling Local Planning Document Examination: Hearing Week 3:

Matter 16: Open Space - Issue 16a: Open Space and Local Green Space

Submission statement on behalf of The Friends of Haywood Road Community Centre (and bowling green). (1504461)

Comment ID: lpd_pub_a/6

Q1.

Does the Plan make appropriate provisions for the protection and provision of open space; and the designation and protection of local green space; in accordance with national policy? [Policies LPD 20 – LPD 22]

Q4.

Has sufficient consideration been given to the designation of Local Green Space (LGS)? [Policy LPD 22]

Do the Council's proposed Main Modifications or Additional Modifications would resolve the concerns and make the Plan sound?

No (as of Feb 22nd 2017): The original response to the Local Planning Document indicated in error that we considered the Plan 'Sound'. We do consider that changes are necessary to resolve our concerns.

Changes that are needed to make the Plan sound:

Policy LPD22: Inclusion of the former Bowling Green, Haywood Road as Designated Local Green Space (and on proposals map).

Policy LPD20: the following changes are suggested (in italics):

Sub-para. (a)

the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of its usefulness, attractiveness, quantity and quality in a suitable location (*i.e. with the same level of accessibility to a similar population*) as *the facility that is lost;*

Sub-para. (b)

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect access to open space, *including through the loss of that open space, and opportunities...*

Minor change: Correction of error in the proposals map at Emmanuel Avenue, Porchester, to remove open space designation on house & garden.

Statement

The Hearing guidance states there must not be new responses or fresh evidence and we have aimed to do that. However, the position is a changing one, with increasing public support for our campaign, and a changing Council position (outside the Local Plan).

In addition, the Council has responded to the consultation and rejected designation of the land as LGS; we wish to answer the points in the assessment not covered in our submission.

Current situation regarding Haywood Road Community Centre & former bowling green.

Gedling Borough Council's Cabinet met on Feb 2nd to discuss the sale of the Community Centre and the Bowling Green. The Cabinet resolved to pass the Centre over to the Haywood Road Community Association¹. The sale of the bowling green is still to go ahead and planning permission for housing is to be sought. In an additional resolution Cabinet agreed to give the HRCA an opportunity to obtain the Bowling Green area as long as the arrangements met the Council's financial requirements i.e. to dispose of the land.

The two resolutions pertinent to the open space were:

- c) gives approval to apply for outline planning permission for residential development on the Bowling Green land at Haywood Road, Mapperley...
- d) in principle, agrees to the disposal of the Bowling Green and authorises Officers to advertise the Council's intention...

(Cabinet report, Feb 2nd Minutes & additional recommendation not yet available)

Very positive discussions are taking place between the HRCA and the Borough Council's Community Asset Transfer (CAT) team. The whole site is integral to the future of the Community Centre as envisaged by the HRCA and its business plan as part of the CAT. Both parties agree that the CAT process will have to account for the future of the bowling green and have its future resolved.

NB The Council has not to our knowledge suggested a change to the Local Planning Document (LPD) regarding the Bowling Green.

¹ Haywood Road Community Association is to be the formal body assigned to run the Community Centre as from April. The Friends of Haywood Road Community Centre (and bowling green) as the original respondent is continuing this submission to represent the views of various groups involved in efforts to save the Bowling Green for public open space and use with the Community Centre. Central to these is the Save Haywood Road Community Centre Steering Group, which consists of local residents and user representatives who are willing to support the Haywood Road Community Association, some to become members in April.

Summary of case

A. Claim for Haywood Road Bowling Green to be Local Green Space.

The assessment should acknowledge that space is special to the local community, does have a particular history, and is significant owing to it being valuable as open space in this location, and irreplaceable.

B. The need for protection of HRFBG in addition to LP20

Protection under LP20 is conditional & subject to interpretation; this alone is not sufficient because the space is under a specific threat of development by the Council itself. If the Inspector agrees then it needs more protection as LGS.

C. Value of the Bowling Green in future use as recreation/informal open space.

The Local Planning Document policy LP20 intends to assure open space use into the future. This potential is relevant and the Steering Group has plans for the Bowling Green to contribute to open space and recreation provision.

A. **Claim for Haywood Road Bowling Green to be Local Green Space.**

1. A Local Green Space submission was part of the consultation response [Ref: lpd_pub_a/6] and an assessment was made by the Borough Council [LPD/OPE/02]. The assessment seems to hinge on the view that the site does not have additional value or significance to justify designation over and above being protected open space; this section deals with those matters.
2. Special to the local community. The importance to the community is not mentioned in the assessment. There is great public support for the plans of SHRCC to develop and use the open space. Since attention has been drawn to the proposed sale a large number of people have lent their support, through letter-writing, petitioning and support on social media². The Feb 2nd Cabinet report listed 1456 respondents, of which 821 recorded concern over the irreversible loss of the last area of open space and 838 that the Bowling Green provides a green lung for people and wildlife.
3. Proposals for uses of the space have been enthusiastically welcomed, and the Community Centre management has been re-invigorated, in anticipation of being able to use the open space for the community. The following examples of support are in comments received through the online petition:

“This is a lovely little refuge which serves a whole community: either with its presence in a built up busy area, or as a resource on which activity takes place.”

² A Change.org internet petition has raised over 850 signatures to save the Bowling Green, and a Facebook page has received 6,000 ‘likes’. The SHRCC facebook post on the green space designation being turned down reached 1.8 thousand people which is the joint highest reach in the past 4 months. Posts on the green space always gets a higher percentage of likes and shares than other posts.

“This is a really special space that counter balances the hectic nature of Mapperley top and the surrounding traffic and adds to the special sense of place in Porchester Gardens.”

“The community of Porchester Gardens Mapperley young and old needs a green space with a small play area this side of the Plains Road. This is the last chance.”

4. History. The Council’s assessment suggests this is limited and relates generally to the location of the site within the Porchester Gardens Estate rather than the significance of the site itself. The history of the Gardens themselves is described in the submission. However, the history of the site includes having been a plant nursery owned by Mr & Mrs Doubleday. Their son, James was killed in action in Flanders on March 18th 1917, co-incidentally almost exactly 100 years ago. He is recorded on the memorial at the top of Woodthorpe Drive (around 400m away). With no-one to inherit the Doubleday’s business it was eventually passed to a group of four local church and voluntary organisations and then purchased by GBC and the Bowling Green established.
5. Thus this particular site provides an important and irretrievable link to the whole Porchester Gardens’ history. Possibly more importantly it provides an opportunity to enhance and strengthen that link through its future use. Save Haywood Road Community Centre Steering Group have plans in hand to develop this link with a public garden and interpretation board. Having said that, a public garden also gives the opportunity to reflect the ‘allotment gardens’ aspect of Porchester Gardens’ history.
6. Significance The Former Bowling Green remains the only open space in Porchester Gardens with public access (currently limited). This adds to its special nature in this area. The value of open space for health & well-being is well-understood and its importance is reinforced in the Local Planning Document and the Borough Council’s community, recreation and open space strategies. The Local Planning Document gives very clear policy support for open space provision and improved accessibility.
7. What we highlight below emphasises the significance of the Bowling Green, which is not reflected in the LGS assessment. The Council’s Green Space Strategy mentions several aspects where the Bowling Green is relevant, in all of which Porchester ward and this area particularly, show deficiencies.
8. Of the four types of Green Space the Bowling Green can usefully provide for the report identifies deficiencies in all for Porchester Ward, and this area particularly. There are seven specific instances, under the categories of Parks & Gardens, Amenity Open Space, Children’s Play spaces (by area and facility) and Allotments and community gardens. The Bowling Green is only identified in the report as outdoor sport provision. Figures 5.18 and 7.3 and 8.5 (which shows this part of the borough specifically) graphically illustrate the point.
9. In addition, the accessibility of open space is crucial. The Bowling Green is accessible to many households on foot, in line with all the strategies supporting open space provision,

and specifically in the Local Plan Document. What is more, it means that people in Porchester Gardens would not have to cross Woodborough Road to the North to access a play space, park & garden. Many respondents have mentioned the barrier that this is.

10. We estimate that there is a population of 1,500 within 500m of the Bowling Green South of Woodborough Road only (possibly as many again within 500m to the North & West). If there were not a play space here in future, there would be a similar population (with about 80 under 5 only & 100 80+) without any park or play space within 500m.

11. Local Plan protected open space

The Local Plan identifies protected open space of all types. The nearest is Breckhill recreation ground, about 500m away, but across Woodborough Road. The next nearest play space is at Valley Road, appr. 1km to the South East. The three next nearest are amenity open space around a private school, elderly persons' complex and church/community centre³.

12. In short, without the Bowling Green, the local area is devoid of suitable open space for recreation, health and well-being.

Meeting the purpose of the National Planning Policy Framework

13. The National Planning Policy Framework states: "Local communities .. should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance *to them*." The local community has brought this site forward; by not designating this land the Council is not fulfilling this intention of the NPPF.

14. The NPPF goes on to say that "thus local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances"; 'very special circumstances' is wording that deliberately mirrors how Green Belt is protected. There are special circumstances here; just as with Green Belt there is more pressure on this land than similar land elsewhere owing to its prospect of sale by the Authority for housing.

B. The need for protection of HRFBG additional to LP20

15. With the future of the site likely to be determined through a planning application, as representatives of the community that value the Bowling Green, we are concerned that the Local Planning Document gives it insufficient protection. We wish to ensure that any planning application decision reflects the full weight of the policy and strategies for open space.

16. While generally a very robust and welcome policy LPD20 raises concerns in the circumstances here, where the Council itself is seeking to develop the land. Under LP20 only one of the four criteria needs to be met to allow development, and such conditions could be interpreted to have been met.

³ NB A nearby area indicated on the Proposals Map as open space, at Emmanuel Avenue, near Porchester Road, about 1km to the South of the Bowling Green, is a house and garden with new dwellings currently under construction. The Council has acknowledged this error.

17. For example, the Cabinet report of 2nd Feb suggests that the land is surplus to requirements in terms of the Council's outdoor bowls provision and also that other new areas can substitute for the Bowling Green in terms of children's play areas. We would contest those views.
18. If the Inspector shares our view that LP20 does not assure the site's future, then designation as LGS is the logical conclusion. Failing that, in order to reinforce the protection of open space, more certainty is sought in Policy LPD20 and the changes on page 1 are requested.

C. Prospective use for the Bowling Green as recreation/informal open space.

19. It's very important to us that the Inspector understands the potential use for the land in open space use. The Porchester Gardens area has been almost wholly developed as private land over the past century so there is no prospect for additional open space. However, this Plan can ensure the future of this existing open space, as Designated Open Space.
20. The plans of the Steering Group offer exciting prospects for public use, increasing amenity, improving health and well-being and maintaining people's access to local open space. Many Council policies and strategies promote open space for informal and formal recreation, supporting health and well-being, and the plans of the Steering Group fit those strategies.
21. The plans are best described in the letter to Gedling Borough Council outlining the Save Haywood Road CC plans: "Our discussions within the local community have stimulated some amazing ideas not just for the Centre itself ... but for the green space , based on the following themes:
 - a community space , developed and looked after by the local community - a peaceful garden, an oasis for the residents and community but with flexibility for community events - including a Porchester festival, garden parties, weddings, celebrations, elderly gatherings and support for those with disabilities alongside open cinema evenings and other ideas being developed;
 - small scale allotment space , run, managed and developed by local residents;
 - a children's open / play space , integrated with the Community Centre and in particular the Pre-School who are looking to expand their business model and allow even greater outside play for the children's development "
22. This work is moving ahead with outline plans developed by Green Scene, a local green space development group.
23. We would also draw attention to the recent Communities and Local Government Committee (CLG) report on public parks (Feb 2017). To quote the Chair:

"Every local authority should have a strategic plan, recognising that parks are much more than just grass and tulips and bringing in resources from outside the traditional budgets. Parks make vital contributions to physical and mental health and bring significant community benefits. They also contribute to biodiversity and climate change mitigation and can assist in local economic growth.

Parks are treasured public assets, The Government have a leadership and co-ordination role to play and volunteers do fantastic work in the sector, but the primary responsibility lies with local authorities."

24. Gedling BC does have strategies in place and clearly recognises the value of parks, but has still decided on the loss of this space. The Haywood Road Bowling Green, with enthusiastic volunteers available to bring in resources and be innovative over its use fits the vision of the CLG Committee report. The local authority's responsibility is to ensure its survival, through this Local Plan.

25. Finally, the whole case is well expressed by a respondent to our online petition:

"Porchester Gardens lacks open space for residents to use. Our young family has nowhere to pop to on our door step for a walk and play. Not everyone has access to a car or are able to make the journey to Woodthorpe Park or Breckhill (both with a large steep hill between us and them!), so the bowling green is ideally located for young and old to enjoy.

The lack of green space in the area is a real issue for our wildlife as well as people. DEFRA's report Making space for Nature (2010) led by Professor Lawton identified the need for connectivity and reduction in fragmentation of habitats. Although the bowling green isn't known to be of significant wildlife value on a county or national scale, it still provides a stepping stone for generalist species. Such species like hedgehog and garden bird species are under increasing threat from localised habitat loss and the bowling green could be enhanced to benefit them.

The bowling green area could accommodate a small play area, space for quiet contemplation as well as exciting community garden/ orchard and with room for wildlife in a very densely populated area. A relatively small site that could make a big difference to so many people."

(K Haw, Nottingham, on Change.org)

(Statement 2,664 words)