

STURMINSTER MARSHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LOCAL GREEN SPACES REPORT



JUNE 2021

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Local Green Spaces

Policy background

The designation of Local Green Spaces is governed by guidance in paragraphs 99 & 100 of the 2019 National Planning Framework

99. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should 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 updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.
100. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
1. a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 2. b) 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), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 3. c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Within Sturminster Marshall Parish, a number of sites has been suggested as potentially qualifying for Local Green Space status and designation of these sites is thought to be consistent with the objectives set out in paragraph 99 of the National Planning Framework.

Selection and Assessment

The sites detailed in this report have been selected based on the results of the initial consultation event and the household survey. Of the sites given high scores by people in the parish one, the Golf Course, was rejected because, although highly rated as a valued area for recreation and potential wildlife value, it does not qualify as it is defined as an extensive tract of land under the criteria set out in paragraph 100c of the National Planning Framework guidance notes.

Assessment was made using the framework set out in the guidance documents and based on a number of criteria.

Local Green Spaces within the parish fall into two main groups

1. Sites used for active recreation. Charborough Green and Churchill Close fall within this category.

2. Sites valued for their cultural value and used for more informal recreation. Maypole Green, Stocks Green, Timber Green and Trafalgar Green fall within this group.
3. Sites of wildlife value which are also used for informal recreation. This group comprises Bartons Ground, The Old Railway Line and Walnut Tree Field, although the last of these also has significant archaeological value, as a listed Ancient Monument.

Where plant species lists are given, these are based on casual observations by the members of the Environment Working Group of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group rather than systematic sampling of the communities present. Nomenclature in these lists follows **Bowen, H. (2000): *The Flora of Dorset***. Pisces Publications, Newbury.



Individual Site Assessments

LGS1: Barton's Ground



Barton's Ground is owned by Eton College but has been leased to the Sturminster Marshall Parish Council since 2000, at a peppercorn rent, as a community asset. The initial 20-year lease was renewed in 2020 for a further period of 5 years, subject to annual review allowing the college to terminate the lease early should they so desire. Under the terms of the lease, the Parish Council has been responsible for maintenance and management of the site and it planted the two groups of trees early during the initial lease period.

Bartons Ground is an area which, until about 30 years ago, was grazed by sheep. The main vegetation type is MG1 as defined below. Within the site are three other features: a temporary pond in which standing water is present when winter ground water levels are high and the two areas of woodland planted by the Parish Council. A permissive footpath crosses the site.

This site is used as open space, primarily by walkers and dog walkers and has connections to a wider footpath network, in particular, the adjacent Wareham Forest Way. It is part of the historic flood meadow system and was formerly grazed, primarily by sheep. The combination of grassland, woodland and an ephemeral pond, whilst not of especially high wildlife value, does provide a measure of diversity not found in adjacent built-up parts of the village or the short-term grasslands of nearby agricultural fields. In combination with the neighbouring golf course, it also forms part of a more extensive wildlife corridor extending to Henbury Farm. Its ownership by Eton College provides an additional strand to the connections between the

village and Eton: the living of St Mary's Sturminster Marshall was, for many years, in the gift of the college, meaning that it had control over the appointment of vicars and a number of them were actually former 'beaks' of Eton.

In a household survey carried out in 2020 by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, a significant number of respondents valued Bartons Ground as a valuable open space. Of the areas of semi-natural (as opposed to sown grassland used for more formal recreation) it was second in importance only to the Walnut Tree Field, which is also an area of MG1 grassland adjacent to the River Stour.

Meeting the criteria

Bartons Ground is immediately behind houses in High Street and is connected to the latter by a footpath, so it fulfils the criterion of being reasonably close

The site is special because it provides both an enhanced diversity of wildlife between housing and relatively species-poor agricultural grassland. It is a tranquil location used extensively for quiet recreational activities.

Whilst the site has no great historical value, other than its connection to Eton College, and no dramatic scenery, it is still a location with a quiet beauty with the combination of grassland, trees and shrubs.

As part of what was once more extensive areas of mesotrophic grassland in the Stour Valley, and, especially with the temporary pond and ditches, it represents the character of a village that has been said to be built on natural springs.

The above features qualify Bartons Ground to be a Local Green Space.

Characterisation

National Vegetation Classification Community MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland.

Arrhenatherum elatius grassland is a widespread community in which coarse-leaved tussock grasses, notably *A. elatius* with usually smaller amounts of *Dactylis glomerata* and *Holcus lanatus*, are always conspicuous and generally dominant. Large umbellifers are frequent throughout and sometimes abundant, and the sequential flowering of first *Anthriscus sylvestris* and later *Heracleum sphondylium* is highly distinctive. Tall-herbs are generally infrequent, though a variety of species may attain dominance locally.

Above all, this is ungrazed grassland. It is characteristic of circum-neutral soils throughout the British lowlands and occurs on road verges, railway embankments, in churchyards and neglected agricultural sites, such as pastures and meadows. Without regular mowing, stands are eventually invaded by scrub.

The temporary pond has a distinctive vegetation, dominated by *Carex hirta* (Hairy Sedge). whilst the woodland areas contain a mixture of tree species in which Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the most common. Locally Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) or Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) form patches of limited size but, overall, the site is dominated by

Arrhenatherum elatius (False Oat-grass) with *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's-foot) and *Alopecurus pratensis* (Meadow Foxtail) being the most abundant of the associated species. The most abundant tall herb is *Anthriscus sylvestris* (Cow Parsley), which assumes co-dominance in spring.

Other species in the grassland (whilst this is not a systematic compilation, it is the result of a large number of walks across the area in the spring and summer of 2020)

<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Rye-grass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Meadow-grass
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Barbarea vulgaris</i>	Winter-cress
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Sonchus oleracea</i>	Sow-thistle
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Lesser Stitchwort
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Cranes-bill
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock

Temporary pond species

<i>Carex hirta</i> (dominant)	Hairy Sedge
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating Sweet-grass
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly Sow-thistle
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckoo-flower

Close to the backs of houses in High Street is a patch of suckering Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) trees which fail to reach maturity because of Dutch elm disease, and Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastaneum*).

Close to this is one patch of planted trees in which *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) is most abundant but with some *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak) and *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch) and *Sorbus aucuparia* (Rowan). The other planted woodland adjacent to the golf course is of *Fraxinus excelsior* with some *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak) and a sparse understorey of *Corylus avellana* (Hazel).

A short stretch of ditch across the central part of the site has *Prunus spinosa* (Blackthorn) and a single bush of *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn)

Individual trees of *Aesculus hippocastaneum* (Horse Chestnut), *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*, a Cherry and a single Japanese Maple are also present, whilst the hedgerow separating the site from the golf course is composed of a mixture of

Fraxinus excelsior

Corylus avellana

Acer campestre (Field Maple)

Populus tremula (Aspen), which is also suckering into Bartons Ground close to the kissing gate leading to the Gladwish plots.

Aesculus hippocastaneum

Ulmus glabra

Sambucus nigra (Elder)

As well as a range of “garden” birds (Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Dunnock etc) Buzzard and Kestrel have been seen on Bartons Ground, suggesting that small mammals, such as field mice or voles, may also be present. Insects include the Poplar Hawkmoth, associated with the Aspen clump.

Name of Local Green Space	Bartons Ground	
Location / Grid reference	SY950998	
Size (in hectares)		
Settlement to which it relates	Sturminster Marshall village	<input type="checkbox"/> within <input type="checkbox"/> immediately adjoining Y <input type="checkbox"/> outside (specify distance)
Reason site identified for review	Quiet open space with semi-natural vegetation used for casual recreation	
Accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/> public open space <input type="checkbox"/> footpaths / bridleways	<input type="checkbox"/> commonland / permissive <input type="checkbox"/> clear views into site
Current use and general description	Used as open space, primarily by walkers and dog walkers with connections to a wider footpath network.	
Qualities	High / Med / Low	Notes / Explanation
Landscape quality / importance (eg in key view from a public area)	L	
Historic or cultural significance	L	The living of St Mary's Sturminster Marshall was, for many years, in the gift of Eton College: their ownership of this parcel of land is further evidence of the historic link between the College and the Parish
Recreational value (can include places valued for their tranquillity)	M	A quiet area close to the centre of the village providing ease of access and connections to wider footpath network
Wildlife value	M	The combination of grassland, woodland and an ephemeral pond provide a measure of diversity. In combination with the adjacent golf course, it also forms part of a more extensive wildlife corridor extending to Henbury Farm.
Any existing development consents?	Yes / No	No
Landowner details (if known) and any feedback (once contacted)	Owned by Eton College and leased by Sturminster Marshall Parish Council	
Public interest (if evidenced eg local 'friends' group)	The household questionnaire identified this site as one of high value to the community	



Bartons Ground



Temporary pond on Bartons Ground

LGS2: Charborough Green



Charborough Green is an open area bounded by Railway Drive and Charborough Way within a modern housing development.

The area is used for casual recreation, especially by children (a junior goal is present on the site) and has been used for social fund-raising events. It is used overwhelmingly by those who live close by, rather than the community as a whole. It does, however, serve as a green break between the adjacent housing.

Meeting the criteria

Charborough Green is within the settlement, being an open space contained by surrounding housing development.

The site has little landscape value and no historical connections.

However, it is a location of significant recreational value, especially in providing a safe space for children to engage in play and informal games. It also provides an amenity for residents in the immediate vicinity.

Although of lesser importance than some of the other suggested areas in the parish, Charborough Green, nevertheless, is a valued open space used extensively by those in surrounding houses.

On recreational ground, Charborough Green meets the requirements for designation as a Local Green Space.

Characterisation

An site is an area of, mainly, *Lolium perenne* (Rye-grass) recreational turf, with scattered trees of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), and Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) with a containing hedge of domesticated species.

Name of Local Green Space	Charborough Green	
Location / Grid reference	SY94589944	
Size (in hectares)	0.39	
Settlement to which it relates	Sturminster Marshall village	<input type="checkbox"/> within Yes <input type="checkbox"/> immediately adjoining <input type="checkbox"/> outside (specify distance)
Reason site identified for review	Informal recreation area within dense housing development	
Accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/> public open space Y <input type="checkbox"/> footpaths / bridleways	<input type="checkbox"/> commonland / permissive <input type="checkbox"/> clear views into site
Current use and general description	The area is used for casual recreation, especially by children (a junior goal is present on the site) and has been used for social fund-raising events. It consists of an area of mown <i>Lolium perenne</i> (ryegrass) with scattered trees (flowering cherries and field maple) and a containing hedge.	
Qualities	High / Med / Low	Notes / Explanation
Landscape quality / importance (eg in key view from a public area)	L	The site is embedded within a modern housing estate
Historic or cultural significance	L	The site has no inherent features of historic or cultural interest
Recreational value (can include places valued for their tranquillity)	M	The area is used for informal games by people in the immediate vicinity and has been the site of fetes organised by local organisations.

Wildlife value	L	As an area of mown grass with a few scattered trees, the wildlife value of the site is low, though it does provide some variety with the urbanised locality.
Any existing development consents?	No	
Landowner details (if known) and any feedback (once contacted)	Dorset Council	
Public interest (if evidenced eg local 'friends' group)	Household survey identified the area as being of value, especially to local residents.	
Other notes eg links to footpath network, boundary definition etc,	In the context of the extensive modern development, this provides a "green lung" and an area used by neighbouring households.	



Charborough Green

LGS3: Churchill Close



This open space was designed as an integral part of the original plan for local authority housing in the early 1950s.

Churchill Close is the main formal and informal recreation centre for Sturminster Marshall village. It is currently the location for both adult and junior football. A cricket square was formerly also present. At one side of the site is a children's play area. In the past, the site was used as the focus for major social events such as carnivals and flower shows.

Meeting the criteria

Churchill Close is in the heart of Sturminster Marshall village and, indeed, the developing Dorset Council Local Plan has suggested that any future retail development should be located in close proximity to it to provide a true village centre.

The open nature of the site and lack of features other than mown grassland means that it has a very low wildlife value and cannot be regarded as scenic in the same way as the surrounding Green Belt. However, when taken in the context of the surrounding local authority-built housing, it does have a distinctive character which defines this part of the village. As such it has considerable historic and cultural significance.

The main value of Churchill Close is its use for organised sport for both adults and children. Without it, there would be no current locations in the village where such activities could take place.

It a household survey carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, Churchill Close was the most valued of all the open spaces in the parish.

On recreational grounds alone, Churchill Close should qualify for Local Green Space designation: the additional cultural and historic context within this is placed adds further weight to its case for inclusion.

Name of Local Green Space	Churchill Close	
Location / Grid reference	SY947998	
Size (in hectares)	2.36	
Settlement to which it relates	Sturminster Marshall village	<input type="checkbox"/> within Y <input type="checkbox"/> immediately adjoining <input type="checkbox"/> outside (specify distance)
Reason site identified for review	A large public open space within the heart of the village	
Accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/> public open space Y <input type="checkbox"/> footpaths / bridleways	<input type="checkbox"/> commonland / permissive <input type="checkbox"/> clear views into site
Current use and general description	Used for both formal and informal recreation by all ages	
Qualities	High / Med / Low	Notes / Explanation
Landscape quality / importance (eg in key view from a public area)	M	This open space was designed as an integral part of the original plan for local authority housing in the early 1950s and, thus, defines the character of this part of Sturminster Marshall
Historic or cultural significance	L	The site holds no features of special historical significance. Its cultural value is associated with the vision of those overseeing the development of the public housing scheme
Recreational value (can include places valued for their tranquillity)	H	This is the main centre for both adult and junior football. A cricket square was formerly also present. At one side of the site is a children's play area. In the past, the site was used as the focus for major social events (eg carnivals and flower shows) and is thus part of the cultural heritage of village life.
Wildlife value	L	
Any existing development consents?	No	
Landowner details (if known) and any feedback (once contacted)	Sturminster Marshall Parish Council	
Public interest (if evidenced eg local 'friends' group)	This was the most valued of green open spaces by respondents to the household questionnaire	



Churchill Close



Churchill Close Children's Play Area