

DAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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BY EMAIL (via Rosie.Morgan@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

27 July 2017

Dear Mr Yuille,

Thank you for your letter dated 18 July 2017. Please find below the information on which the Working Group based the analysis for the designation of areas as Local Green Space (LGS) in the Plan.

The detailed guidance issued by the local authority, as referred to in your letter, was based on the criteria in paras 76, 77 and 78 of the NPPF. The Working Group analysed the criteria in respect of potential LGS and the local community's responses to the 2014 Neighbourhood Plan community survey to identify evidence to justify the designated green spaces. To provide further information, each criteria in para 77 is taken in turn below. The designated LGS are described as sites 1, 2 or 3 as referred to in the Plan.

'Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves...' (para 77)

All of the LGS sites are on the border of the settlement boundary, thereby all being close to homes and amenities. They are all within easy walking distance and have a positive visual impact for the community around the periphery of the built environment of the village. Sites 1 and 3 also provide easy access to popular public footpaths that are used by local residents and others from neighbouring villages, as well as local rambling clubs such as Davenham Ramblers, Crewe and Nantwich Rambling Club. On sites 1 and 3, access is gained from several locations on Public Rights of Way. There are no barriers to accessing any of the spaces.

'...where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community...' (para 77)

The designated LGS were strongly identified as being special to the local community in the 2014 Community Survey.

Residents were asked 'What is important to you as a resident of Davenham?' with 'very unimportant' on one end of the scale and 'very important' at the top end.

75% considered walking routes and public rural footpaths to be very important

89% considered the village boundaries by way of fields and countryside to be very important

79% considered easy access to countryside/rural atmosphere to be very important

90% considered the green open spaces within and around the village to be very important (a separate question was asked with regard to the playing fields within the village centre)

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The survey went on to ask ‘Bearing in mind that some development will have to take place, are there any areas in Davenham which you think are important to be protected as green space?’ The responses to this question were emphatically in favour of protecting the 3 sites subsequently designated LGS in the Plan. The main reasons were:

- recreational use of the land in particular the public footpaths for walkers and runners;
- protecting the rural views and areas of natural beauty;
- protecting the wildlife habitat area; and
- protecting a buffer between the local villages.

A small selection of the comments in response to the above question are quoted below to give an indication of the local community’s opinion as to how and why these spaces are considered to be ‘special.’

“The area between Moulton and Davenham is vitally important as you get many dog walkers and people walking in the mornings enjoying the main countryside of Davenham”

“Need to preserve the highly valued and much used rural footpaths criss-crossing from Davenham to Moulton”

“Protect fields surrounding the village boundary”/“Green fields within the centre of the village”

“Protect all land from east of the A533 from the spar garage to the parish boundary”

“Fields surrounding the village in particular with footpaths running through them”

“Maintenance of green environmental gaps between Davenham and its adjacent settlements”

“Greenfield areas which act as buffer between villages and roads”

“Protect farmland especially buffer zones that define village boundaries such as between Davenham, Bostock and Moulton”

“Protect wildlife and quality of open spaces”

“Very important to keep the central part of the village as rural/community”

The 2014 survey also highlighted that the local community believes Davenham to have a rural village identity, despite being officially classified as being part the wider Northwich urban area. These green spaces directly on the edge of the built environment help to maintain that important identity and characteristic as a rural village.

In the appeal decision for the Beehive Lane development in Moulton (on land abutting LGS site 1), the inspector made considerable reference to the character of the villages and the maintenance of the gap between Moulton and Davenham as being important to the local people. The erosion of the gap was noted to be a “matter of considerable concern” for the local authority and the Beehive Lane development already reducing that gap by about a third. This has been further eroded by the approval for development of the Fountain Lane site on the Davenham side of the land, making it even more imperative to protect this special area as LGS for the local community use and enjoyment.

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‘...holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value ...tranquillity or richness of wildlife’ (para 77)

This criteria has been detailed in the Plan but, to highlight a few points, each site has high to medium or medium habitat distinctiveness, as identified by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, therefore evidencing a richness in wildlife. The sites, in particular 1 and 3, are very well used, with Public Rights of Way, allowing regular recreational use by dog walkers, runners, ramblers and others, both local and further afield. The sites also provide a tranquil area away from the bustle of village life, main roads or any other disruptions.

The views across the spaces are vital to the beauty and tranquillity of these more rural areas on the edge of the settlement in Davenham. Site 3 has spectacular views across the Cheshire plain and has particular historical significance as it borders a conservation area and the setting for a listed building (Davenham Hall).

Site 2 is characterised by gently sloping pastureland, hedgerows, ditches and some mature trees. These features assist in providing a landscape buffer between the A556 and residential development off Green Avenue, which can be seen in the far distance. To the north the site is bounded by a hedgerow and some hedgerow trees with public footpath and A556 directly adjacent. The site lies in the 4e East Winsford Undulating Farmland character area which has undulating topography, trees, hedgerows and woodland areas which have screening potential. To the south, Green Lane and Green Avenue marks the existing settlement boundary of Davenham. Directly to the east of the site and adjacent to Green Lane is the recently developed 'The Oaks', comprised of 36 dwellings. The encroachment by this recent development into the gap between Davenham and Kingsmead is considered to be partly mitigated by both existing mature hedgerow and trees and new landscaping. The remaining green space provides an important buffer between views (which include towards the church spire) from the A556 and Davenham and retains the integrity and definition of the settlement gap.

A recent planning application around site 2 was refused largely due to erosion of the environmental buffer and intrinsic value of the countryside, and extending the built environment towards the A556. This supports the significance and value of this green space for LGS designation and also demonstrates further why it is demonstrably special to the local community.

‘...where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land’ (para 77)

Below are the approximate hectares for each site:

- Site 1, approx. 48.10 Ha
- Site 2, approx. 5.534 Ha
- Site 3, approx. 18.09 Ha

These represent a small proportion of the green spaces in Davenham but, for the reasons set out above and in the Plan, they are considered to be most special to the local community. In the absence of a central village green or other more visual green space within the village, the amenity and landscape value of the designated green spaces around the periphery of the settlement boundary hold particular significance to the community, the existing playing fields being screened by existing development.

All designated sites are vital in protecting the beauty and wildlife surrounding the settlement and the regular use of sites 1 and 3 identify the daily significance and contribution these areas make to the local community.

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Without them, residents would be living in a village at great risk of losing its individuality and would be walking the concrete pavements instead of rural public footpaths. The Government and the public are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of mental and physical wellbeing. Being able to enjoy the recreational and visual value of a tranquil escape to these green spaces is key to achieving a healthy balanced lifestyle, hence the local community identify these green spaces as a very important reason why they choose to live in Davenham.

As recommended, a copy of this letter and your letter dated 18 July will be placed on the Parish Council website.

Yours sincerely

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
Davenham Parish Council