Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan

Local Green Space Assessment- Final Report

Hough-on-the-Hill Parish Council

June 2022

Quality information

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Abbreviations used in the report

Abbreviation	
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LGS	Local Green Space
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
SKDC	South Kesteven District Council
TPO	Tree Preservation Order

Executive Summary

This report is an independent assessment of Local Green Spaces to be potentially designated through the Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan being developed by Hough-on-the-Hill Parish Council. The work was agreed with the Parish Council and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as part of the national Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support Programme led by Locality.

The first neighbourhood plan for Hough-on-the-Hill was made in 2015, but the Parish Council has now started work on its replacement. Hough-on-the-Hill is a rural parish in South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire. Within the parish boundary are two smaller settlements alongside the main village of Hough-on-the-Hill itself, namely Brandon and Gelston- and with some other outlying clusters of properties and individual houses in the countryside.

Within the first neighbourhood plan for Hough-on-the-Hill, Loveden Hill was designated as a Local Green Space. As a key criterion for the successful designation of a Local Green Space is that it must be capable of enduring beyond the plan period; this means, like other previously-designated Local Green Spaces across England, there is no need for it to be re-designated every time the relevant neighbourhood plan is updated, and therefore Loveden Hill Local Green Space is outside the scope of this assessment.

This assessment is an evidence base study. It therefore does not itself designate Local Green Spaces. Rather, it provides supporting evidence for the Parish Council to decide, guided by this report and other relevant available information, whether to designate further sites as Local Green Spaces and if so, which sites to select for designation in accordance with the national Local Green Space criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), further advice in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the Locality guidance on Local Green Spaces.

National policy on Local Green Spaces is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and is supported by Planning Practice Guidance. The NPPF is a high-level document which sets the overall framework for the more detailed policies contained in local and neighbourhood plans.

The approach to Local Green Space assessment is based on the Government's PPG as summarised in Chapter 2 above and Locality's guidance on Local Green Spaces.

A 'traffic light' rating of all sites has been given based on whether the site is considered by AECOM to be an appropriate candidate for designation through the Neighbourhood Plan.[1] The

[1] As an important point to be aware of throughout the process- the Examiner's view on whether a candidate site is appropriate or not for LGS designation is never possible to guarantee or to second-guess. Therefore, there is no certainty that the Examiner will approve of sites rated green by AECOM or even that he or she might reject sites rated red by AECOM. However, AECOM have applied professional town planning judgement and relied on national policy on Local Green Spaces to come to its conclusions on Red, Amber and Green ratings in an effort to assist the Parish Council to the maximum extent possible, and the Examiner will use the same criteria of national policy combined with professional town

traffic light rating indicates the following judgement, based on the evidence collected during the desktop assessment and site visit:

'**Green**' is for sites which, in AECOM's view, make a clear contribution to one or more of the five "demonstrably special" criteria. The relevant criteria are listed in the summary table. It should be noted, however, that evidence would be required to support any designation, even where it is judged that sites are likely to meet the criteria.

'**Amber**' sites are judged in AECOM's view to be at the lower end of suitability for designation, but which, subject to further evidence gathering, may have potential to be appropriate for designation. As for green sites, evidence would be required to support any designation, even where it is judged that sites are likely to meet the criteria.

'**Red**' sites are considered in AECOM's view to be unsuitable for designation either because the desktop assessment and site visit have led to the conclusion that they would not meet any of the five "demonstrably special" criteria, or due to the potential designation being contrary to national guidance. This includes designation of highway verges and linear green spaces along public rights of way.

Twenty-one sites were identified as potential Local Green Spaces by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group, with ten in or near Hough-on-the-Hill (designated with the prefix H), five in or near Brandon (designated with the prefix B) and six in or near Gelston (designated with the prefix G).

This report concluded that 13 sites are rated green and therefore considered appropriate to put forward for Local Green Space designation in the submission Neighbourhood Plan. These sites are:

- H1 The Wilderness, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H2 Bosom Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H3 Hall Close, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H4 Castle Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H7 Land west of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H8 Land east of New Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H9 Recreation Ground, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H10 All Saints' Churchyard, Hough-on-the-Hill
- B1 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Brandon
- G1 Village Green, Gelston
- G2 Pinfold, Gelston
- G3 Land southwest of Gelston

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planning judgement. It should be noted that different Examiners can, and do, come to very different conclusions on very similar sites.

- G6 Land north of Gelston

A further three whole sites and one partial site are rated amber and therefore potentially suitable for designation. For these sites, it is considered that it may be more difficult to demonstrate they meet the NPPF criteria. These sites are:

- H5 Land north of High Road, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H6 Land east of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill
- B3 Land east of Brandon (southernmost part only)
- B4 Protection Wood, Brandon

The remaining four whole sites and one partial site are not considered to be appropriate for designation in the neighbourhood plan, as follows:

- B2 West of Blind Lane, Brandon
- B3 Land east of Brandon (northernmost part only)
- B5 Land between Hall Road and Hall Lane, Brandon
- G4 Land southeast of Gelston
- G5 Land east of Gelston

From the list of suitable and potentially suitable green spaces, the Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Committee should engage with the local community to select sites for designation as Local Green Spaces.

The proposed Local Green Space designation should be discussed with the landowner at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they are aware of the proposal.[2] This will reduce the risk of challenge(s) to the Neighbourhood Plan as it travels through the required stages of consultation and independent examination.

[2] It will also be helpful to discuss the proposal with stakeholders who may use the space such as sports group and organisations. It is also recommended to contact the neighbourhood planning officer at South Kesteven and the relevant sports and recreation department.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report is an independent assessment of Local Green Spaces to be potentially designated through the Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan being developed by Hough-on-the-Hill Parish Council. The work was agreed with the Parish Council and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as part of the national Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support Programme led by Locality.

1.2 The first neighbourhood plan for Hough-on-the-Hill was made in 2015[3], but the Parish Council has now started work on its replacement. Hough-on-the-Hill is a rural parish in South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire. Within the parish boundary are two smaller settlements alongside the main village of Hough-on-the-Hill itself, namely Brandon and Gelston- alongside some other outlying clusters of properties and individual houses in the countryside. The parish boundary is illustrated in **Figure 1-1** below.

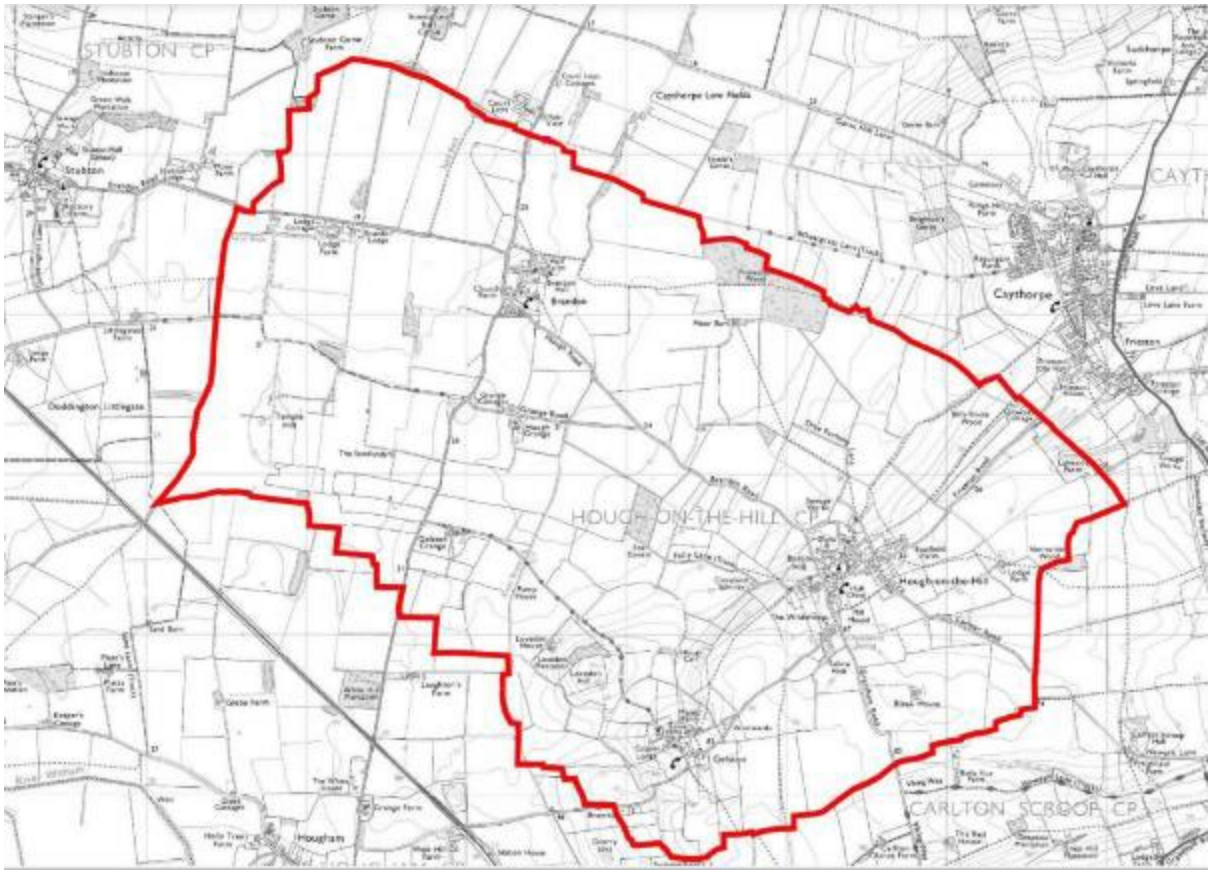

Figure 1-1: Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Area boundary

Source: Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan 2015

1.3 At the village of Hough-on-the-Hill itself, there are eight Grade II-listed buildings and one Grade I-listed building (the parish church), as well as the Scheduled Monument of Castle Hill. At Gelston, the village cross is both Grade II-listed and a Scheduled Monument.[4]

[3] Available at http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13884&p=0
[4] Source: Defra's Magic Map, available at https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx

1.4 Government policy is clear it is possible to designate as Local Green Space land already protected by existing designations, such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. See the review of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) below for more details.

1.5 Within the first neighbourhood plan for Hough-on-the-Hill, Loveden Hill was designated as a Local Green Space. As a key criterion for the successful designation of a Local Green Space is that it must be capable of enduring beyond the plan period[5], this means, like other previously-designated Local Green Spaces across England, there is no need for it to be re-designated every time the relevant neighbourhood plan is updated, and therefore Loveden Hill Local Green Space is outside the scope of this assessment.

1.6 Having already adopted their first Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council will be aware that Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan as well as having regard to the emerging Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans can add value to the development plan by developing policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. The intention, therefore, is for the adopted South Kesteven Local Plan[6] to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Hough-on-the-Hill whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

1.7 This assessment is an evidence base study. It therefore does not itself designate Local Green Spaces. Rather, it provides supporting evidence for the Parish Council to decide, guided by this report and other relevant available information, whether to designate further sites as Local Green Spaces and if so, which sites to select for designation in accordance with the national Local Green Space criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[7], further advice in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and the Locality guidance on Local Green Spaces[8].

[5] As set out in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance. More details on the PPG's approach to Local Green Space are provided later in this assessment.
[6] Available at http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=26202
[7] Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
[8] Available at https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/

2. Policy Context

2.1 Neighbourhood Plan policies, allocations and designations must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan.

2.2 National policy on Local Green Spaces is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and is supported by Planning Practice Guidance[9]. The NPPF is a high-level document which sets the overall framework for the more detailed policies contained in local and neighbourhood plans.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

2.3 The paragraphs within the NPPF of relevance to local green space designation at Hough-on-the-Hill are set out below, but this report has regard to all aspects of national planning policy where appropriate.

2.4 Paragraph 92 (c) notes that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

2.5 Paragraph 101 notes that 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.

2.6 Paragraph 102 states that '*the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

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

c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land'.

Planning Practice Guidance (2014-present)

2.7 The NPPF is supported by the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Its section on Local Green Space designation[10] notes the following points that have most potential relevance to the Hough-on-the-Hill context:

- Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities;

[9] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance
[10] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#Local-Green-Space-designation

- Plans[11] must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making;
- Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented;
- The Local Green Space will need to meet the criteria set out in paragraph 102 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, or structures such as war memorials are located, [or] allotments;
- The proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close. For example, if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served;
- There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different, and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed. However, paragraph 102 of the NPPF is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. Consequently, blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name;
- Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 102 of the National Planning Policy Framework there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space;
- Some areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may already have largely unrestricted public access, though even in places like parks there may be some restrictions. However, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access (e.g., green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty);
- Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present. Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with land owners, whose legal rights must be respected;
- Areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may be crossed by public rights of way. There is no need to designate linear corridors as Local Green Space simply to protect rights of way, which are already protected under other legislation;
- A Local Green Space does not need to be in public ownership. However, the qualifying body should contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan;

[11] Including neighbourhood plans as well as Local Plans.

- Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts (as per NPPF paragraph 103), but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners;
- Management of land designated as Local Green Space will remain the responsibility of its owner. If the features that make a green area special and locally significant are to be conserved, how it will be managed in the future is likely to be an important consideration. Local communities can consider how, with the landowner's agreement, they might be able to get involved, perhaps in partnership with interested organisations that can provide advice or resources;
- If land is already protected by designations such as Scheduled Monuments or Conservation Areas, consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space. Different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes. The upshot of this element of government policy is that it is the Parish Council's decision as to whether or not to designate based on whether they believe 'additional local benefit' would be gained.

South Kesteven Local Plan (2020)

2.8 The Local Plan defines the spatial vision for South Kesteven District to 2026 and sets out a series of objectives designed to achieve the vision and includes strategic policies to achieve the vision.

2.9 **Policy OS1: Open Space** states that all existing open space, including allotments, parks, equipped play space, sport pitches and informal natural open space, route ways and corridors will be protected.

It further states that development proposals for existing open spaces will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:

a. the proposal will provide increased or improved open space and/or recreational facilities; or

b. the site is not required to meet the local standard set out above; or

c. equivalent (or better) replacement provision is to be made within the locality; and

d. the site does not support important or protected habitats or species.

The policy was informed by the South Kesteven Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Report 2017.[12]

[12] Available at http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21278

3. Methodology

3.1 The approach to Local Green Space assessment is based on the Government's PPG as summarised in Chapter 2 above and Locality's guidance on Local Green Spaces[13].

Task 1: Identifying Sites to be included in the Assessment

3.2 The first task is to identify which sites should be considered as part of the assessment. For Hough-on-the-Hill, the sites were identified by the Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Committee following an audit of open and green spaces in the Neighbourhood Area and community consultation through a door-to-door survey. The sites were catalogued and, where necessary, land ownership determined.

3.3 In most cases, the landowner was known to the Parish Council already, but where this was not the case, AECOM assisted the Parish Council by carrying out relevant Land Registry searches of the relevant sites. The technical assessment of site suitability for designation as Local Green Space was carried out entirely independent of site landownership- in other words, in no case did who owns the land, or whether the land was in multiple ownerships, influence the results of the suitability assessment. Rather, as the Parish Council is already aware, identifying the landowners is effectively an element of the LGS consultation exercise.

Task 2: Site Assessment

3.4 To assess the sites for their suitability for designation as Local Green Space, a two-step process was followed. An initial audit was undertaken to identify sites which were subject to existing designations that would make them unsuitable for designation. This included any land covered by open space policies that afford the same protection as the Local Green Space designation. It also included any land which had been designated for other uses.

3.5 This initial audit resulted in no sites being removed from the long list provided by the Parish Council. In other words, all sites provided by the Council had, in policy terms, no general obstacles to being potentially designated as Local Green Space.

3.6 The next step, therefore, was to assess all sites according to the criteria set out in NPPF paragraph 102, with reference to the PPG. The assessment was conducted initially through desktop review, following which a site visit was conducted in order to verify the information gathered through the desktop assessment and to add further details on aspects difficult to assess without physical inspection, such as visual amenity and accessibility. The approach to each of the relevant NPPF criteria is set out on the following page.

[13] Available at https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/

'Close to the community it serves'

As noted above, the PPG states that "the proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close."

To reflect this guidance, all sites were assessed against their proximity to the nearest built-up area. Where sites were apart from or not adjoining the existing built-up area, this included consideration of the approximate walking time from the edge of the settlement to the closest part of the site.

'Local in character and not an extensive tract of land'

The PPG states that "there are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be…. however, Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land…. [but] there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space."

Although there is no strict definition of what constitutes an "extensive tract of land", it is interesting to note that a proposed designation of a 19-hectare site as Local Green Space was judged to be in conflict with national policy by the Examiner of the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan (North Somerset) in October 2014[14]. For the purposes of this assessment, therefore, 19 hectares has been applied as the ceiling for sites to be considered smaller than "extensive". An alternative approach AECOM is aware of is that Examiners may consider a site "extensive" relative to the size of other candidate sites.

'Demonstrably special to the local community'

Paragraph 102 (b) of the NPPF sets out five possible criteria that could make a site demonstrably special, but there is little guidance on how these criteria should be judged. In order to assist community groups with Local Green Space designations, Corby Council (Northamptonshire) produced a technical note in May 2018 which acts as a helpful starting point for consideration of whether sites are likely to meet the five criteria[15]. This has been used as the basis of the assessment of whether sites are demonstrably special.

- **Beauty:** this includes consideration of the site's aesthetic value and potential contribution to streetscape, landscape and settlement character. Natural features such as woodland and water can contribute to the site's beauty.
- **Historic significance:** this includes consideration of whether the site includes recognised historic assets, whether it has links to a historic person or event, or whether it has retained historical features and boundaries.
- **Recreational value (including as a playing field):** this includes consideration of whether a site can accommodate a specific activity or a range of activities,

[14] Examiner's report available at https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/7045/m4-1328_redrown_appendix_4_backwell-np_examiners-report.pdf

[15] Available at https://www.corby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/files/Technical%20Guidance%20Note%20-%20Local%20Green%20Space%20Designation.pdf

and whether it offers unique recreational value that cannot be provided on other undesignated sites.

- **Tranquillity:** this includes consideration of whether the site offers a place for quiet reflection and peaceful enjoyment. It should provide a feeling of remoteness and enjoyment of the space should not be interrupted by man-made structures such as roads, power-lines or excessive lighting, or noise from vehicles or industry.
- **Richness of its wildlife:** this includes consideration of whether a site is designated for its wildlife value (e.g., Local Wildlife Site or Pocket Park), whether it includes features such as ancient hedgerows, Ancient Woodland, veteran trees, pockets of woodland and wildflower meadow, and/or whether it supports a unique and/or diverse range of wildlife.

Task 3: Consolidation of Results

3.7 The desktop assessment was updated following the site visit. Informed by the findings from the site assessment, the final list of LGS recommendations was drafted. All site assessment information is drawn together into a summary table which ranks sites from most to least appropriate for designation in the Neighbourhood Plan, based on their potential to meet the criteria set out in the NPPF.

3.8 A 'traffic light' rating of all sites has been given based on whether the site is an appropriate candidate to be considered for designation through the Neighbourhood Plan.[16] The traffic light rating indicates the following judgement, based on the evidence collected during the desktop assessment and site visit:

3.9 **'Green'** is for sites which make a clear contribution to one or more of the five "demonstrably special" criteria. The relevant criteria are listed in the summary table. It should be noted, however, that evidence would be required to support any designation, even where it is judged that sites are likely to meet the criteria.[17]

[16] As an important point to be aware of throughout the process- the Examiner's view on whether a candidate site is appropriate or not for LGS designation is never possible to guarantee or to second-guess. Therefore, there is no certainty that the Examiner will approve of sites rated green by AECOM or even that he or she might reject sites rated red by AECOM. However, AECOM have applied professional town planning judgement and relied on national policy on Local Green Spaces to come to its conclusions on Red, Amber and Green ratings in an effort to assist the Parish Council to the maximum extent possible, and the Examiner will use the same criteria of national policy combined with professional town planning judgement. It should be noted that different Examiners can, and do, come to very different conclusions on very similar sites.

[17] For any site that the Parish Council wishes to propose as Local Green Space in the submission Neighbourhood Plan, such evidence might include, alongside the conclusions of this report, the views/opinions of local residents and the Parish Council, and any technical evidence (e.g., photographs, site-specific surveys/reports, or land use covenants) that were either not available to AECOM or were commissioned after this report was completed. The justification report for Loveden Hill is one previous example of such supporting evidence.

3.10 **'Amber'** sites are judged to be at the lower end of suitability for designation, but which, subject to further evidence gathering, may have potential to be appropriate for designation. As for green sites, evidence would be required to support any designation, even where it is judged that sites are likely to meet the criteria.

3.11 **'Red'** sites are considered to be unsuitable for designation either because the desktop assessment and site visit have led to the conclusion that they fail to meet the criteria set in national planning policy and/or guidance. This includes designation of linear green spaces along public rights of way.

4. Site Assessment

4.1 Twenty-one sites were identified as potential Local Green Spaces by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group, with ten in or near Hough-on-the-Hill (designated with the prefix H), five in or near Brandon (designated with the prefix B) and six in or near Gelston (designated with the prefix G). **Table 4-1** sets out the sites included in the assessment, which are shown in the overview map at **Figure 4-1**. More detailed maps of the sites are included in **Appendix A**.

Table 4-1: Sites included in the assessment

Site Ref	Address	Area (hectares)[18]	Taken forward for assessment?
H1	The Wilderness, Hough-on-the-Hill	2.77	Yes
H2	Bosom Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	7.57	Yes
H3	Hall Close, Hough-on-the-Hill	3.3	Yes
H4	Castle Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	0.35	Yes
H5	Land north of High Road, Hough-on-the-Hill	0.54	Yes
H6	Land east of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill	0.62	Yes
H7	Land west of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill	2.00	Yes
H8	Land east of New Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	3.9	Yes
H9	Recreation Ground, Hough-on-the-Hill	0.57	Yes
H10	All Saints' Churchyard, Hough-on-the-Hill	0.81	Yes
B1	St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Brandon	0.16	Yes
B2	West of Blind Lane, Brandon	0.73	Yes
B3	Land east of Brandon	2.14	Yes
B4	Protection Wood, Brandon	21.3	Yes
B5	Land between Hall Road and Hall Lane, Brandon	0.97	Yes
G1	Village Green, Gelston	0.1	Yes
G2	Pinfold, Gelston	0.004	Yes

[18] Approximate based on Google Earth satellite images.

Site Ref	Address	Area (hectares)[18]	Taken forward for assessment?
G3	Land southwest of Gelston	2.63	Yes
G4	Land southeast of Gelston	0.33	Yes
G5	Land east of Gelston	0.65	Yes
G6	Land north of Gelston	0.77	Yes

Map key

- Parish and neighbourhood area boundary
- Candidate Local Green Space site boundary
- Existing Local Green Space site boundary

Figure 4-1: Map of existing and potential Local Green Spaces

Site Assessment Summary

4.2 The following table (**Table 4-2**) provides a summary of the findings of the assessment for all of the sites identified for potential Local Green Space designation within the Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Area.

4.3 Twenty of the twenty-one sites are considered to meet both national planning criteria for Local Green Space designation set out in the NPPF paragraphs 102 (a) and 102 (c) (i.e., in reasonably close proximity to the community served, and being local in character and not an extensive tract of land).

4.4 However, it is considered a medium to high risk that site B4 (Protection Wood), though in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, could be seen by an Examiner as constituting an extensive tract of land. While this does not, in AECOM's view, preclude the site from going forward for assessment on other relevant criteria, this does place the site at a disadvantage from the start compared to the others. There is further technical detail on the 'extensive tract of land' issue in the full assessment below.

4.5 The remainder of the assessment therefore concentrates on the potential of each site to be designated according to the rest of the criteria set out in NPPF paragraph 102 (b), in other words, whether it is likely to be *demonstrably special to a local community and hold 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.*

4.6 Where sites have been considered to meet one or more of these criteria, the potential reasons for designation have been listed, and recommendations provided on the supporting evidence that could be used to justify their designation on these grounds. The sites have been given a Red/Amber/Green rating indicating their potential suitability for designation. **Red** indicates that the site is unlikely to be suitable for designation, Amber indicates that a site may be suitable but that there is a possibility that it may not meet the demonstrably special criteria, and Green indicates that the site is likely to meet the demonstrably special criteria. The suitability rating is displayed on the maps in **Figures 4-4** to **4-6**. The point about Protection Wood possibly failing the 'extensive tract of land' criterion as set out above means that it was considered from the start unable to achieve a Green rating, irrespective of its performance on other criteria, so it will be rated either Amber or Red depending on its performance on other criteria- in the end it was judged an Amber.

4.7 In summary, the assessment found that 13 sites are appropriate for Local Green Space designation in the Neighbourhood Plan, three whole sites and one partial site are potentially suitable, while the remaining four whole sites and one partial site are not appropriate for designation.

4.8 It should be noted, however, that all sites must be supported by appropriate and robust evidence of how they meet the criteria set out in national planning policy for designation as Local Green Space. While the conclusions in this report have been based on a combination of desktop research and site visit, other evidence may exist or emerge as set out in the footnote on page 13 above. It may also be possible to achieve designation of sites which are currently rated unsuitable if appropriate evidence can be produced subsequently to support their designation.

Table 4-2: Local Green Space Assessment Table

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H1	The Wilderness, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area[19] and comprises the foreground of Conservation Area Important View 3	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees and hedgerows contributing to a rural character and framing views, and a strong contribution of open space, particularly grazed fields. **Historic significance:** None other than previously-mentioned Conservation Area location **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Though clearly tranquil, not exceptionally so relative to surroundings **Richness of wildlife:** Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland[20]. Trees on site will enhance biodiversity.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area by including an Important View. Trees on site have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

[19] See Conservation Area map at http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=15757&p=0 and Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan at http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=15756&p=0
[20] See https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/farming/advice/helping-species/lapwing/

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H2	Bosom Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and comprises the foreground of Conservation Area Important Panoramic Views 8 and 25 and Important Views 9 and 11.	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal notes Area's special interest relies in part on trees and hedgerows contributing to a rural character and framing views, and strong contribution of open space, particularly grazed fields. **Historic significance:** Historic ridge and furrow pattern in northern half, as documented in Conservation Area Appraisal. **Recreational value:** Southern part of site is crossed by public footpath with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) designation HOTH/20/1.[21] Used for tobogganing in snowy weather. **Tranquillity:** Provides wide panorama of tranquil countryside in foreground and background. **Richness of wildlife:** Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland. Trees and hedgerow on site will enhance biodiversity.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area through Important Views and Important Panoramic Views. Development would be highly visible and entirely change this status. Trees on site have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

[21] Source: Definitive online Lincolnshire County Council footpath map at http://lincs.locationcentre.co.uk/internet/internet.aspx?articleid=L4h7HM4AmHM~&preview=true

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H3	Hall Close, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and publicly accessible. Also used for occasional community events as the unofficial 'village green' of Hough-on-the-Hill.	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees and hedgerows contributing to a rural character and framing views, and a strong contribution of open space, particularly grazed fields. **Historic significance:** Comprises the site of former Hough Priory- uneven surface indicates historic remains and interpretation panel confirms significance; also forms the setting of Grade I-listed Church of All Saints. **Recreational value:** Southern edge of site is crossed by public footpath with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) designation HOTH/6/1 **Tranquillity:** Though clearly tranquil, not exceptionally so relative to surroundings **Richness of wildlife:** Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland. Trees at northern edge of site.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area as the site of Hough Priory and as the setting of a Grade I-listed building. Trees at northern edge of site have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H4	Castle Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because site is a Scheduled Monument[22] located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area. The area to be considered for designation should be limited to that of the Scheduled Monument as some Neighbourhood Plan Examiners have indicated reluctance to designate private garden land lacking exceptional features as Local Green Space (the	**Beauty:** Well-maintained private garden; beautiful view into the site (see Appendix A). **Historic significance:** Site itself is a scheduled Monument and is within the setting of a Listed Building (Grade II-listed School and Attached Schoolhouse). It is a key feature within the Conservation Area's Area of Visual Dominance. Conservation Area Map shows the boundary of the Scheduled Monument designation. **Recreational value:** None, closed to the public **Tranquillity:** Site is screened by trees and feels tranquil **Richness of wildlife:** Many trees- Priority habitat inventory- Deciduous Woodland (England), National Forest Inventory (GB) Broadleaved Woodland.[23]	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area as the site of a motte and bailey, a Scheduled Monument and within the Area of Visual Dominance. Extensive trees have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that the land covered by Scheduled Monument status meets the NPPF and PPG criteria and could be proposed as a Local	

[22] Scheduled Monuments were formerly known as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. For more information on Scheduled Monuments, see https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments/. Note also as per PPG policy noted in Chapter 2 above, for a Scheduled Monument to be designated as Local Green Space, 'additional local benefit' needs to be demonstrated, which is not defined but is likely to consist of the range of LGS criteria other than 'historic significance' as this criterion would overlap with the Scheduled Monument designation to the greatest extent.
[23] Source: Defra's Magic Map.

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
		site and its surrounding curtilage are private garden land).		Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	
H5	Land north of High Road, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes- located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area but the site is a private garden lacking important heritage designations, which on the face of it would make it less demonstrably special. However, the wall dividing the garden from the High Road pavement is low, thus providing a strong and positive visual impact for passers-by; this is recognised by the Conservation Area Appraisal, which includes Important View	**Beauty:** Well-maintained private garden; beautiful views into the site (see Appendix A) **Historic significance:** Located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area. Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees contributing to a rural character and framing views. Provides setting for Grade II-listed School and Attached Schoolhouse and Castle Hill and is the garden of a Positive Unlisted Building. **Recreational value:** None, as closed to the public **Tranquillity:** Site is filled with trees and feels tranquil **Richness of wildlife:** Trees throughout the site.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area by including an Important View. Trees on site have potential to make it rich in wildlife, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and therefore has potential to be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified. However, amber rating given to reflect the fact that some Neighbourhood Plan Examiners have indicated reluctance to designate private garden land lacking exceptional features	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
		20 from the High Road into the garden.		such as Scheduled Monuments as Local Green Space.	
H6	Land east of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes- because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and provides extensive and attractive views out of it	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees and hedgerows contributing to a rural character and framing views, and a strong contribution of open space, particularly grazed fields. **Historic significance:** Immediate neighbour is a Positive Unlisted Building (Jubilee Cottage). **Recreational value:** None, as closed to the public **Tranquillity:** Provides panorama of countryside in foreground and background, contributing to a sense of tranquillity **Richness of wildlife:** Hedgerows and trees along eastern and southern boundaries of site likely rich in wildlife. Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland	While the site is located within the Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area, it is not part of any Important Views or Important Panoramic Views. However, it nevertheless provides an attractive view of open countryside, especially from over the top gate, and contributes to the Conservation Area through trees, hedgerows and open space. The site is low in historic significance, and not open to the public but contributes to a sense of tranquillity. On balance, an amber rating has been given to reflect the fact that the site meets some NPPF criteria and therefore has potential to be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
				Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	
H7	Land west of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because located adjacent to/partially within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and comprises the foreground of Conservation Area Important View 16.	**Beauty:** Site is attractive rural pasture, though not particularly visually remarkable, beautiful in an understated way. **Historic significance:** An earthwork boundary, possibly medieval, lies within the site.[24] Immediate neighbours are Positive Unlisted Buildings. **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Though clearly tranquil, not exceptionally so relative to surroundings **Richness of wildlife:** Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland. Trees and hedgerows around edge likely to be rich in wildlife. Barn owls commonly seen.	Though mainly outside Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area, site makes a clearly-documented contribution to it by forming part of an Important View out of it. Has some historic significance. Trees on site have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

[24] Source: Lincolnshire Heritage Explorer map at https://heritage-explorer.lincolnshire.gov.uk/map

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H8	Land east of New Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes. because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and comprises the foreground of Conservation Area Important Views 10,12, 13, 14 and 19.	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees and hedgerows contributing to a rural character and framing views, and a strong contribution of open space, particularly grazed fields. **Historic significance:** Forms important element of setting for Grade I-listed Church of All Saints. Immediate neighbours are Positive Unlisted Buildings. **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Site is highly visible and makes notable contribution to feeling of rural tranquillity. **Richness of wildlife:** Used for grazing animals-contains trees, hedgerows and small stream, so potentially rich in wildlife. Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area through Important Views, as the setting of a Grade I-listed building and through adjacency to Positive Unlisted Buildings. Extensive trees have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H9	Recreation Ground, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes, because in active use as a recreation ground for children and young people. Also, is the only dedicated play area within the parish, so serves Brandon and Gelston as well as Hough-on-the-Hill.	**Beauty:** More beautiful than many comparable recreation grounds because largely grassed rather than paved. **Historic significance:** None. Site is outside Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area. **Recreational value:** Very high- good quality, new equipment (specifically, a children's' play area and a basketball hoop with hardstanding) and the only formal recreation space in the parish **Tranquillity:** Tranquil when not in active use, because largely screened by trees from the outside. **Richness of wildlife:** Site itself will not be rich in wildlife, but trees around the edge have potential to be so.	The site scores highly on the NPPF criteria in terms of its active use as a recreation ground, even though it lacks heritage significance, is only moderately beautiful and almost by definition will lack tranquillity when in use. However, the trees around the edge are likely to make it richer in wildlife- this could be confirmed through an ecological survey. AECOM therefore considers that the site meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.[25]	

[25] The Parish Council has advised AECOM that the site is protected from development by a covenant, and thus may not need further protection from development. However, in policy terms, this has no bearing on AECOM's assessment of suitability for designation as Local Green Space; a covenant is not a planning designation and therefore the PPG text on designating existing Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas etc. as Local Green Space, where 'additional local benefit' needs to be demonstrated does not apply. Again, this is a

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
H10	All Saints' Churchyard, Hough-on-the-Hill	Yes- because located within Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area and within the Conservation Area's Area of Visual Dominance; also, the spiritual heart of the community and where many loved ones are buried.	**Beauty:** Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan notes that the Conservation Area's special interest relies in part on trees contributing to a rural character and framing views. Comprises the foreground of Conservation Area Important Views 22 and 5. Particularly beautiful as a rural English parish churchyard. **Historic significance:** Within the setting of two Listed Buildings (Grade I-listed All Saints Church and Grade II-listed School and Attached Schoolhouse) and the Scheduled Monument of Castle Hill. Also adjacent to numerous Positive Unlisted Buildings. **Recreational value:** Accessible to general public for quiet enjoyment, though less appropriate for formal recreation. **Tranquillity:** Use as a graveyard provides a strong sense of tranquillity. **Richness of wildlife:** Large number of trees likely to make the land richer in wildlife.	The site makes a clearly-documented contribution to Hough-on-the-Hill Conservation Area; within the Area of Visual Dominance and as the setting of two listed buildings and a Scheduled Monument- also adjacency to Positive Unlisted Buildings. Tree cover has potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding open fields and built-up area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. Accessible for informal recreation. Of most value as spiritual, tranquil heart of the community where many loved ones are buried. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green	

decision for the Parish Council based on an assessment of the costs and benefits, including administrative considerations, of designation versus non-designation.

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
				Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	
B1	St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Brandon; formerly the site of a now demolished social club.[26]	Yes- considered the spiritual and geographical centre of the village and used for fetes in summer. Formerly the site of a now demolished village hall.	**Beauty:** Land itself is not remarkably beautiful, but some beauty derives from its setting at the heart of a historic village close to the Chapel of Ease. **Historic significance:** Within the setting of St John's Chapel, which is Grade II*-listed. **Recreational value:** Open access to public as well as for events in summer. Was formerly the site of the village hall. **Tranquillity:** Not notably more tranquil than its surroundings **Richness of wildlife:** Some trees at edge of site are likely to make the site richer in wildlife than surrounding built-up area or open fields.	The site is demonstrably special to Brandon as the spiritual and geographical centre of the village, its regular community use, and for forming the setting of a listed building. Some trees have potential to make it richer in wildlife than surrounding area, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. Accessible for informal recreation. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner	

[26] The Parish Council have advised AECOM that a covenant applied to the social club requiring the property to be administered, in the event that the social club ceases to exist (which it now has) by the Parish Council for the benefit of the inhabitants of Brandon and district. This is not considered to be an impediment to potential designation as Local Green Space.

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
				being notified (note: the site is in two separate landownerships).	
B2	West of Blind Lane, Brandon	Not obviously special- consists of private garden to west and private paddock to east. Both are inaccessible to public, and garden is entirely screened by trees, thus not visible from public access land in any direction. Paddock is visible but only from a single gateway on Blind Lane and otherwise screened by vegetation	**Beauty:** Land is not notably beautiful except as undeveloped green space **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Not notably more tranquil than surroundings **Richness of wildlife:** Trees and hedgerows border and also divide both plots (the garden and the paddock) which is likely to result in some richness of wildlife; this could be confirmed through ecological survey.	No evidence that site is demonstrably special to the local community. Many plan Examiners are reluctant to designate private gardens as Local Green Space and this is particularly likely here, as garden is neither visible nor accessible. The paddock is visible but only through a single gated entrance. It is not notably beautiful, historically significant or tranquil and has no recreational value. Trees and hedgerows may be rich in wildlife. However, on balance, AECOM considers that it does not meet the NPPF criteria and should not be proposed as a Local Green Space (note: the site is in two separate ownerships).	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
B3	Land east of Brandon	Most of land fenced off behind private houses and for practical purposes used as garden extensions. While AECOM understands from the parish council that there is a restrictive covenant precluding the land from being specifically defined as garden, in practice this is how it is used and thus fails the test of demonstrably special to the local community. However, southern portion of the land is not used as garden and has public footpath running through it, thus could be regarded as demonstrably special.	**Beauty:** (note that all assessments in this column relate only to the southernmost part of the land now that the northern part has been found not to be demonstrably special to the local community- see Figure 4.5 for a map). Land is not outstandingly beautiful but is meaningful as an important transition/gateway between the village and open country beyond. **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** Crossed by public footpath with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) designation HOTH/14/1. **Tranquillity:** As a gateway to the open countryside outside the village, feels more tranquil than the village itself. **Richness of wildlife:** Trees and hedgerows around the edge, plus low scrub, are likely to make the site richer in wildlife than the surrounding open countryside and urban area, but this could be confirmed through an ecological survey.	Northern edge of site screened by hedge from public footpath HOTH/1/1. As stated, north and centre of the site not demonstrably special to the local community. This, combined with indifferent performance on other NPPF criteria, indicates that this part of the site is not suitable for designation as Local Green Space. However, southernmost part of the site is crossed by a public footpath, and relatively important as a transition point between village and countryside, tranquil and potentially rich in wildlife, though with no historic significance. As such, it is recommended that this part of the site gets an amber rating; it is thus potentially suitable for designation as a Local Green Space, subject to the landowner being notified.	North and centre of site: **Red**. South of site: **Amber** See **Figure 4.5** for map of ratings

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
B4	Protection Wood, Brandon	The site is crossed by a public footpath with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) designation HOTH/1/1 which enables direct pedestrian link to Brandon, 1.5 kilometres to the west. Parish Council reports its recreation value is significant; it is by far the largest wooded area in an otherwise largely open parish. Therefore, it is demonstrably special to the local community.	**Beauty:** The site is beautiful as a wooded area, but beauty compromised recently by extensive tree felling and other forest management activities. **Historic significance:** None; it is not Ancient Woodland and Parish Council report was planted in the 20th century. No Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). **Recreational value:** Parish Council reports it is used for dog-walking and other recreation **Tranquillity:** Site is tranquil as a wooded area, though tranquillity compromised through tree felling and other forest management activities. **Richness of wildlife:** Likely rich in wildlife as the largest wooded area in an otherwise open parish. Is designated as the following: Woodland Priority Habitat Network (England)- High Spatial Priority. Woodland Improvement (England).[27] High Spatial Priority. Priority Habitat Inventory- Deciduous Woodland (England), National Forest Inventory (GB) Broadleaved Woodland.	Local Green Space designation, which is as for Green Belt land, would not preclude forestry activities, including tree-felling; see NPPF paragraphs 103 and 147-151, and the PPG[28]. Also, at 21.3 hectares, some Examiners would consider it an extensive tract of land and therefore not suitable for designation. However, this does not prevent it being at least proposed, and as the site is demonstrably special to the local community and scores reasonably well on the NPPF criteria, particularly recreational value and richness of wildlife, it is potentially suitable as Local Green Space, subject to landowner notification.	

[27] Source: Defra's Magic Map.
[28] See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
B5	Land between Hall Road and Hall Lane, Brandon	The land is privately owned, with no public access, and is hardly visible at all from the road or other publicly accessible locations. As such, it cannot be considered demonstrably special to the local community.	**Beauty:** While green and open, the very small portion of the site visible from public land is not notably more beautiful than its surroundings, although a small pond at the northwest corner of the site does add some attractiveness and visual interest. **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Tranquil, but not notably more so than its surroundings. **Richness of wildlife:** The small pond will be an attractor of wildlife, as will the hedges around the edge of the site and scattered trees/orchards within it.	It is recommended that the site not be proposed as Local Green Space. It is not demonstrably special to the local community, it is hardly visible from outside the site, and it has no historical significance, recreational value or notable beauty relative to its surroundings. Though a small pond adds beauty, visual interest and wildlife value, and trees and hedges are also likely to be rich in wildlife, it is not considered that, in the round, it meets the NPPF criteria for designation as Local Green Space.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G1	Village Green, Gelston	As the historic village green forming the centre of Gelston village, including Gelston Village Cross, it is demonstrably special to the local community. It is also entirely accessible to the public and the Parish Council advise that it has official Village Green status under the Commons Registration Act.	**Beauty:** The site is beautiful as part of an ensemble of historic buildings forming the centre of a small English village, focussed on the Village Cross at the centre of the green. It is open to rolling countryside views beyond. **Historic significance:** Site contains Gelston Village Cross, Grade II Listed and a Scheduled Monument. Site is historic focus of Gelston village, crucial to settlement identity. **Recreational value:** Open to public for walking, dog-walking or playing. **Tranquillity:** Tranquil, even though at the heart of the settlement- the village is very small and quiet and the open countryside beyond gives a strong sense of tranquillity. **Richness of wildlife:** As mown grass with no trees, likely not particularly rich in wildlife.	The site is demonstrably special to the local community and forms the setting of a Grade II listed Village Cross which is also a scheduled monument, as well as being the historic centre of a traditional English village, thus crucial for settlement identity. It therefore performs very well on the historic significance criterion, but its beauty, recreational value and tranquillity make an even stronger case for Local Green Space designation. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G2	Pinfold, Gelston	Yes, because is a further historic feature at the centre of the village alongside site G1 and is functionally strongly linked to it. Contains a bench for walkers or passers-by to rest.	**Beauty:** Site is small. Not outstandingly beautiful per se but has a modest charm of its own, helped by a beautiful setting against stone walls and between the village and rolling farmland beyond. **Historic significance:** High. A pinfold is a pound in which wandering animals were kept to protect farmers' crops, until a fine was paid. Many pinfolds have been lost but those that remain, like this one, tell us something of local building materials, as here with the stone walls surrounding the site.[29] A plaque also notes the site's historic significance and it is within the setting of the listed Village Cross, also a Scheduled Monument. **Recreational value:** Accessible to public, with a bench for resting/sitting (both of which are forms of outdoor recreation). **Tranquillity:** Surrounding quiet village and extensive countryside views give a sense of tranquillity. **Richness of wildlife:** Low- entirely mown grass.	The site is demonstrably special to the local community and is within the setting of a Grade II listed Village Cross which is also a scheduled monument. It is functionally linked to the village green and has high historic significance for the reasons stated in the text to the left. Its beauty within its landscape setting, recreational value and tranquillity make an even stronger case for Local Green Space designation. AECOM therefore considers that it meets the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

[29] Information on pinfolds from *England In Particular: A Celebration of the Commonplace, the Local, the Vernacular and the Distinctive* (Sue Clifford and Angela King, 2006).

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G3	Land southwest of Gelston	Yes- site is demonstrably special largely due to its highly visible location as a key component of the setting of the village centre, including the heritage asset at its centre	**Beauty:** Beautiful as foreground component of impressive views over rolling countryside with distant views of the River Trent valley, and as transition between village and open countryside beyond. **Historic significance:** Site contains Shrunken Mediaeval Village (SMV) remains of Gelston, i.e., the remains of now demolished village buildings.[30] Site also forms element of the setting of the Grade II listed Gelston Village Cross, which is also a Scheduled Monument. **Recreational value:** None- not open to public **Tranquillity:** Adds important sense of tranquillity to the village as extensive view of rural land from its centre **Richness of wildlife:** Open pasture, so likely limited, but a few trees around the edge. Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland	Site is demonstrably special due to its visual contribution to the attractive village centre of Gelston and forms an important element of the setting of the Grade II listed Gelston Village Cross, also a Scheduled Monument. It also enhances tranquillity and contains heritage significance in its own right, with the ruins of deserted mediaeval buildings clearly still visible. Despite lack of recreational value and limited wildlife value, AECOM therefore considers that it meets some of the NPPF criteria and could be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

[30] Source; Lincolnshire Heritage Explorer map.

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G4	Land southeast of Gelston	No- the site is entirely used as a private meadow and is not accessible to the public. While there is a single view into the site from the public highway, the site is not highly visible and thus could not be described as demonstrably special to the local community.	**Beauty:** The site is attractive as an undeveloped green meadow, but not outstandingly so. However, the site is only glimpsed from one limited viewpoint and thus does not make a notable contribution to the character or beauty of Gelston as a whole. **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Tranquil, but not notably so relative to its surroundings. **Richness of wildlife:** As an undeveloped meadow, has potential to be rich in wildlife (e.g., orchids) but at the time of a site visit in spring when the meadow was in flower there was no sign of rare plants. Hedgerows around the site likely to be rich in wildlife; this could be confirmed through an ecological survey. Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland	No evidence that site is demonstrably special to the local community. Land is not accessible and only visible from a single gated entrance, thus its contribution to the character of Gelston is very limited. It is not outstandingly beautiful, is not historically significant or relatively more tranquil than its surroundings and has no recreational value. Trees and hedgerows may be rich in wildlife, though grassland appears limited in this respect. On balance, AECOM considers that it does not meet the NPPF criteria and should therefore not be proposed as a Local Green Space.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G5	Land east of Gelston	No- the site is entirely used as a private garden and is not accessible to the public. While there is one attractive view into the site from the public highway, the site is not highly visible and thus could not be described as demonstrably special to the local community.	**Beauty:** The site is beautiful as it is a well-maintained garden shaded by large, mature trees. However, this beauty is only glimpsed from one limited viewpoint and thus does not make a notable contribution to the character or beauty of Gelston as a whole. **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** None **Tranquillity:** Tranquil given that it is a private garden screened by trees that is not accessible to the general public. **Richness of wildlife:** The site is filled with trees and therefore is likely to be rich in and valued by local wildlife.	Site is private garden and thus not demonstrably special to the local community. Many plan Examiners are reluctant to designate private gardens as Local Green Space and this is particularly likely here, as garden has not public access and only visible from a single gated entrance, thus making its contribution to the character of Gelston very limited. While beautiful and tranquil and likely valuable to wildlife due to its tree cover, it is not historically significant and has no recreational value. On balance, alongside the fact it is a private garden, AECOM considers that it therefore does not meet the NPPF criteria and should not be proposed as a Local Green Space.	

Site Ref.	Site Name	Assessment of conformity with NPPF Criteria		AECOM Conclusion and Recommendations	
		Demonstrably special to local community	Particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife)	Conclusion	RAG rating
G6	Land north of Gelston	Yes	**Beauty:** The site is attractive and contains a variety of trees. It borders a stream and contains a pond. As there is no other surface water visible in Gelston, both the trees and water help make the site more beautiful than its surroundings. **Historic significance:** None **Recreational value:** Regularly used for walking and dog-walking. Site is crossed by public footpath with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) designation HOTH/7/1. **Tranquillity:** Site is notably tranquil thanks to its 'hidden-away' feel- it has a single point of access from a quiet lane and the trees screen it from surrounding land. Feels quiet and undisturbed. **Richness of wildlife:** Range of trees (both conifer and deciduous), quiet, unspoilt character and the stream and pond are all likely to make the site highly attractive to wildlife, though this could be confirmed through ecological survey. Like all land in the parish, a priority area for Countryside Stewardship measures addressing lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) habitat issues. Lapwing habitat includes all types of farmland.	Site is demonstrably special to the local community as is used for recreation and dog-walking, containing the footpath that links Gelston with Hough-on-the-Hill village. The site is attractive and contains a variety of trees, making it unusual for Gelston which is otherwise relatively open, and contributing to a notable sense of tranquillity. It also contains a pond and stream, also contributing to tranquillity, making the site more beautiful and likely richer in wildlife than otherwise. While it has no historical significance, it scores well on all other NPPF criteria and as such AECOM considers that it should be proposed as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the landowner being notified.	

Figure 4-2: Summary map of Hough-on-the Hill Local Green Space suitability ratings

Figure 4-5: Summary map of Brandon Local Green Space suitability ratings

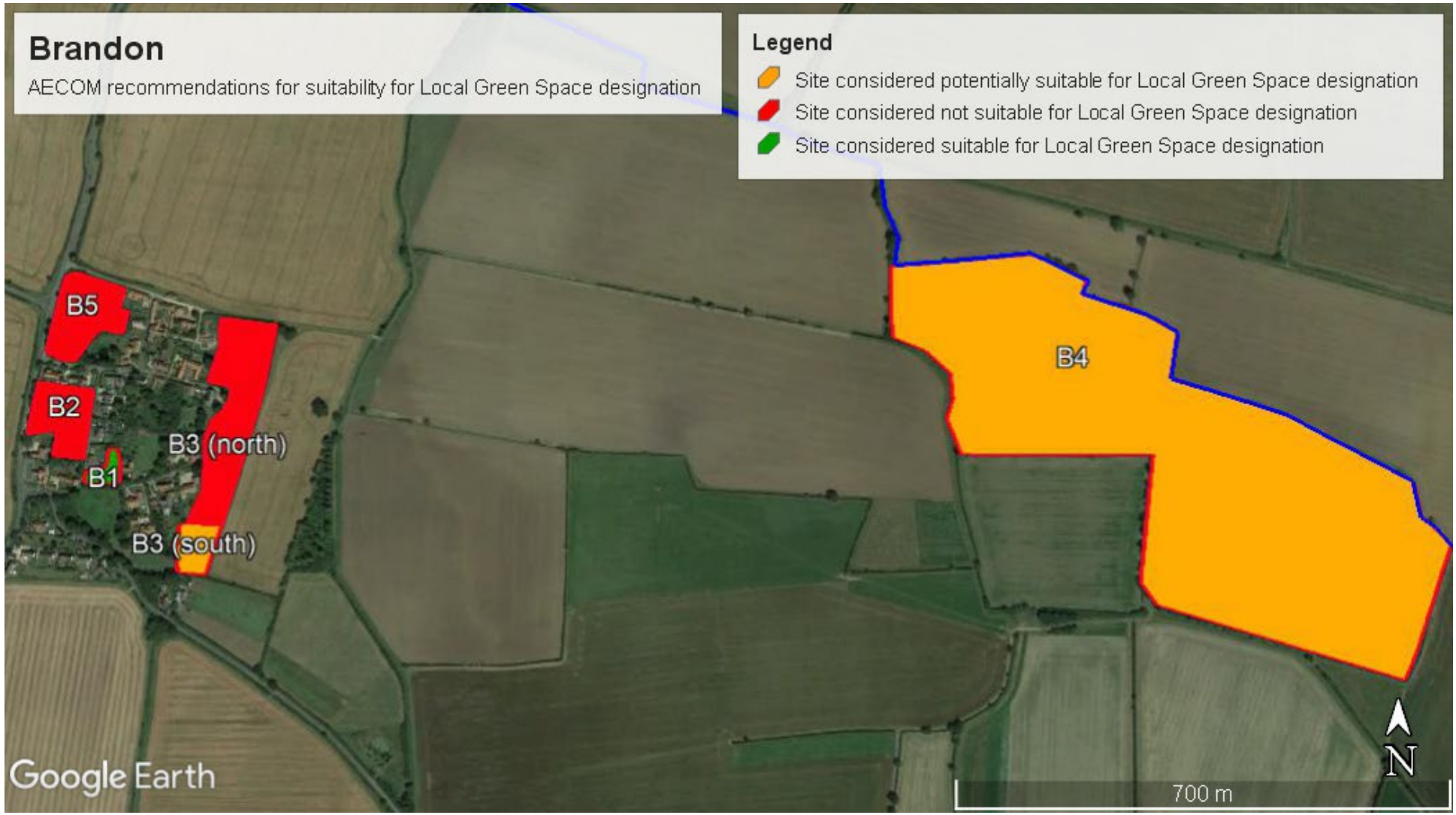

Figure 4-6: Summary map of Gelston Local Green Space suitability ratings[31]

[31] The scale of the map is too small to show G2 clearly, but it forms a square-shaped site with sides of approximately six metres at the north-eastern corner of site G3, separated from it by a stone wall.

5. Conclusions

Local Green Space Assessment Conclusions

5.1 Twenty-one sites were put forward by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group for assessment of their potential for designation as Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.2 This report concluded that 13 sites are rated **green** and therefore appropriate as candidates for Local Green Space designation in the Neighbourhood Plan. These sites are:

- H1 The Wilderness, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H2 Bosom Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H3 Hall Close, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H4 Castle Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill;
- H7 Land west of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H8 Land east of New Hill, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H9 Recreation Ground, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H10 All Saints' Churchyard, Hough-on-the-Hill
- B1 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Brandon
- G1 Village Green, Gelston
- G2 Pinfold, Gelston
- G3 Land southwest of Gelston
- G6 Land north of Gelston

5.3 A further three whole sites and one partial site are rated **amber** and therefore potentially suitable as candidates for designation. For these sites, it is considered that it may be more difficult to demonstrate they meet the NPPF criteria.[32] These sites are:

- H5 Land north of High Road, Hough-on-the-Hill
- H6 Land east of Thompson's Lane, Hough-on-the-Hill
- B3 Land east of Brandon (southernmost part only)
- B4 Protection Wood, Brandon

5.4 The remaining four whole sites and one partial site are not considered to be appropriate candidates for designation in the neighbourhood plan.

[32] Having said this, if the landowner does not object and the Parish Council has the resources to submit a proposal, there is little to lose and possibly much to gain from submitting amber-rated sites to the Examiner, as long as expectations are managed accordingly.

5.5 All sites must be supported by appropriate and robust evidence of how they meet the criteria set out in national planning policy for designation as Local Green Space.

5.6 The conclusions in this report have been based on a combination of desktop research and site visit rather than an analysis of existing evidence, which has not yet been produced (a good previous example of such evidence is Appendix 2 to the existing Neighbourhood Plan- Proposal for Local Green Space Designation of Loveden Hill- Justification Statement). It may be possible to achieve designation of sites which are currently rated amber or red if appropriate additional evidence can be produced to support their designation.

Next Steps

5.7 From the list of suitable and potentially suitable green spaces, the Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Committee should engage with the local community, landowners and other stakeholders to select sites for designation as Local Green Spaces.

5.8 As noted in many cases, if an ecological survey is considered to be needed, specialist input is likely to be required. However, any basic assessment of recreational use can be carried out by Neighbourhood Plan volunteers.

5.9 For sites which are considered to meet the 'demonstrably special' criteria due to their tranquillity or beauty, community surveys may be adequate for this purpose, although input from landscape specialists could also be used to justify designation on the grounds of beauty. Any further assessment of historic significance can be demonstrated through the use of heritage assessments, old maps and other historical records.

5.10 The proposed Local Green Space designation should be discussed with the landowner at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they are aware of the proposal.[33] This will reduce the risk of challenge(s) to the Neighbourhood Plan as it travels through the required stages of consultation and independent examination.

[33] It will also be helpful to discuss the proposal with stakeholders who may use the space such as sports group and organisations. It is also recommended to contact the neighbourhood planning officer at South Kesteven and the relevant sports and recreation department.

Appendix A Site Photographs

The site photographs in this appendix were taken on a visit to the parish on 29th April 2022 which also involved engagement with the Neighbourhood Plan steering group.

Photo 1: Site H1, looking north-west from eastern edge

Photo 2: Site H2, looking north from southern edge

Photo 3: Site H3, looking north from southern edge of site

Photo 4: Site H4, looking east from western edge of site (mound in middle distance is the Scheduled Monument recommended as boundary of designation, flat land in foreground is private garden recommended as outside boundary)

Photo 5: Site H5, looking east from western tip

Photo 6: Site H6, looking north-west from south-east corner

Photo 7: Site H7 (straw-coloured grass in middle distance to left of willow tree), looking north-west

Photo 8: Site H8, looking west from eastern edge

Photo 9: Site H9, looking west from eastern edge

Photo 10: Site H10, looking south-east from within the site

Photo 11: Site B1, looking north-west from southern edge

Photo 12: Site B2, looking north-west from south-eastern corner

Photo 13: Site B3, (showing only southern part rated amber) looking south-east from north-west corner

Photo 14: Site B5, looking south-east from north-west corner

Photo 15: Site G1, looking north-east from western edge

Photo 16: Site G2, looking west from eastern entrance

Photo 17: Site G3, looking south-west from eastern edge

Photo 18: Site G4, looking south from northern edge

Photo 19: Site G5, looking north from southern edge

Photo 20: Site G6, looking south from within the site (western edge)

Hough-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan