

Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces Review



View across the Green Gap between Sturry and Westbere to the west.

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1. Green Gaps

Introduction

The green gap policies were originally formulated in 2002 reflecting national objectives to restrain built development outside urban areas and in the countryside. Within the Canterbury District there has been a gradual erosion of the open countryside and coalescence between built up areas due to development. Gradual coalescence can not only harm the character of the open countryside, but can also adversely impact the setting and special character of villages and the separate identity of the coastal towns.

The Green Gaps are intended to retain the separate identities of existing settlements by preventing their coalescence through development. The locations identified are considered to be important 'pinch points' where settlements are at particular risk of coalescence.

National Policy Context

While there is no reference to Green Gaps within the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) there is a requirement for Local Plans to identify land where development is inappropriate.

Local Policy Context

Adopted Local Plan (2017)

The adopted Local Plan (2017) included seven green gaps. For some of the green gaps the Inspector provided additional comments within the Inspectors Report.

Green Gap between...

- **Urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable** - the Inspector said '...somewhat different to elsewhere, particularly in terms of education, leisure and allotment uses. This reflects the character of these coastal settlements.'¹
- **Canterbury and Sturry**
- **Sturry and Westbere**
- **Sturry and Hersden**
- **Sturry and Broad Oak** - Overlaps with Site 2: Sturry/ Broad Oak
- **Blean and Rough Common** - the Inspector said '...includes land that is not easily seen from Whitstable Road. However, there are public footpaths adjacent to it and the Gap is limited in its extent. The retention of the existing designation is therefore justified.'²
- **Canterbury and Tyler Hill**
- **Canterbury and Bridge** - Overlaps with South Canterbury Strategic site, and 'would

¹ Paragraph 360 within '[Report on the Examination of the Canterbury District Local Plan, June 2017](#)'.

² Paragraph 359 within '[Report on the Examination of the Canterbury District Local Plan, June 2017](#)'.

ensure an adequate separation between the settlements.’³

Canterbury District Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

The council adopted the *Canterbury District Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)* and associated documents⁴, which includes green gaps within the context of the District’s green infrastructure.

A key feature of green infrastructure is that networks are strategically planned and that spaces and places are connected; Green Gaps can be important components of this green infrastructure network. Green Gaps connect people in settlements to the natural environment surrounding them, as well as supporting a wide range of plants and animals. To ensure green infrastructure is strategically planned Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are often used to map areas spatially enabling assessment at a site- and district-wide level.

- Green Gap between **Urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable** -
 - Identifies that the Blean BOA extends into the green gap, and seeks green infrastructure improvements which improves biodiversity, access to relieve recreational pressure and address deficits.
 - Identifies that the green gap includes a few small fragments of ancient woodland.
 - The action plan identifies an action to ‘Tankerton Football Club – provision of football in Green Gap with biodiversity enhancements to the area’.
- Green Gap between **Canterbury and Sturry** - Long term aspiration to ‘maintain and enhance connectivity in eastern outskirts of the city – enhance linking of The Blean BOA across Barton Down/ Shelford Landfill site, through green gap to River Stour’.
- Green Gap between **Canterbury and Bridge** - Seek to create connections to new open space at Stuppington Lane including links to the Green Gap, existing adjacent green spaces and tree belts.

Methodology

The methodology undertaken to review the green gaps was:

1. Analysis of the 2017 Local Plan **Inspector’s report**, and review of any information in relation to the adopted green gaps.
2. Analysis and review of Canterbury District **Green Infrastructure Strategy**, and associated documents, (2018) for information in relation to the adopted green gaps.
3. Analysis and review of ‘**Intersection of LCA and planning policies, recommendations (2021)**’. Landscape based note which included how the Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2020) considered green gaps as

³ Paragraph 142 within ‘[Report on the Examination of the Canterbury District Local Plan, June 2017](#)’.

⁴ Evidence Report and action plan.

well as any recommendations and implications emerging from the process. This also included identification of areas which could be considered for future green gaps.

4. **Site analysis** - the current land use of the green gap was assessed using existing information, a Geographic Information System (GIS) and site visits in March 2021.
5. **Changes since 2017** - an assessment of whether any planning applications have been granted on the green gaps since their adoption, and if so a review of the potential impacts.
6. **Recommendations** - identification of the recommendations for the green gaps based on all of the evidence.

Summary of Outcomes

Recommendations for the green gaps are identified within the table below. Appendix A provides further information on the assessment of the green gaps.

Green Gap between...	Existing or under consideration	Recommendation
Urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable	Existing (OS7)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Canterbury and Sturry	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Sturry and Westbere	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing green gap, but amend boundary to exclude the building to the east.
Sturry and Hersden	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing green gap, but amend boundary to exclude new development (in relation to the garage).
Sturry and Broad Oak	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Blean and Rough Common	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Canterbury and Tyler Hill	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Canterbury and Bridge	Existing (OS6)	Retain existing Green Gap.
Herne Bay and Reculver	Under consideration	Do not designate as a green gap. The area is already protected under other existing designations such as Undeveloped Coast which remain appropriate.

Herne Common and Herne Bay / Herne	Under consideration	Do not designate as a green gap. Parts of the area are already protected under other existing designations. Designation not considered necessary through 2017 Local Plan for Strode Farm allocation
Strategic allocation at Cockerling Farm and Chartham	Under consideration	Do not designate as a green gap. Parts of the area are already protected under other existing designations. Designation not considered necessary through 2017 Local Plan for Cockerling Farm allocation.
Canterbury and villages to the east (Littlebourne / Bekesbourne / Patrixbourne)	Under consideration	Do not designate as a green gap. This area has not changed since the adoption of the 2017 Local Plan, which did not identify a need for a Green Gap at this location.

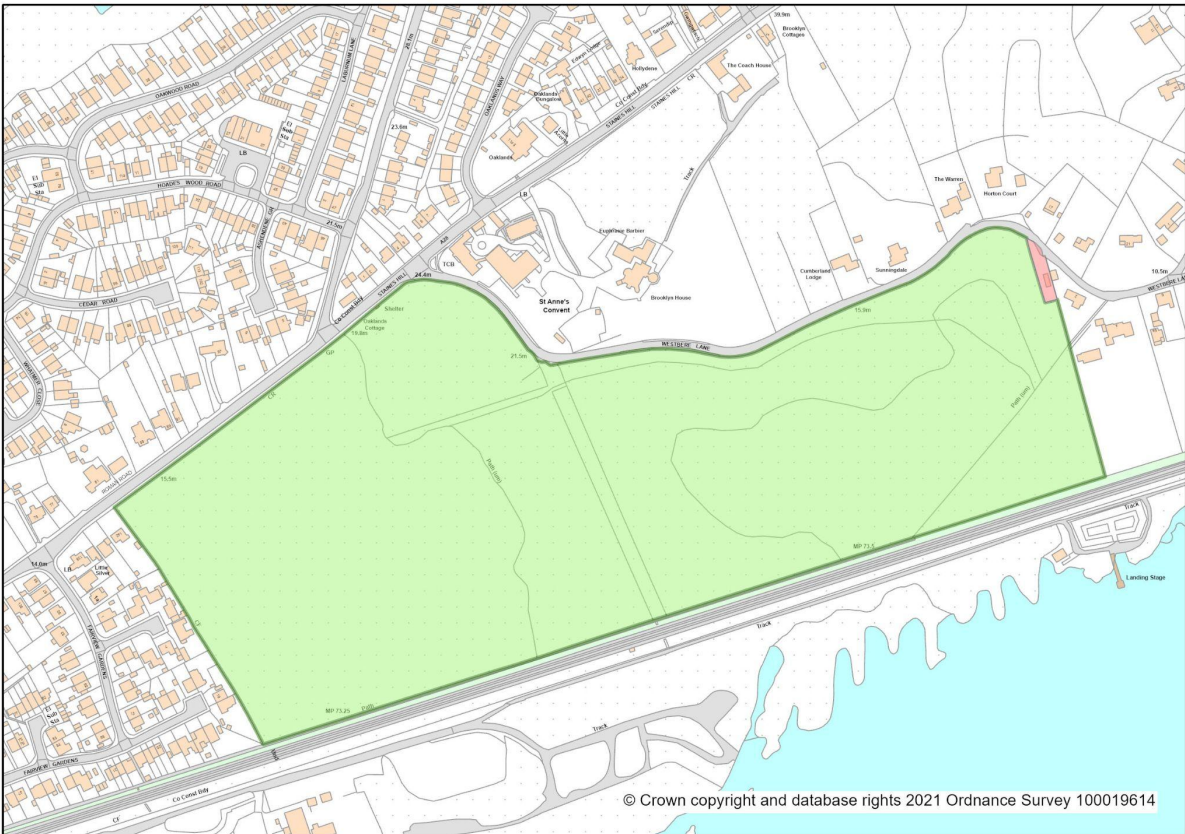


Figure 1: Green Gap between Sturry and Westbere. Area in green is the proposed boundary for the green gap. The red area is proposed to be removed.

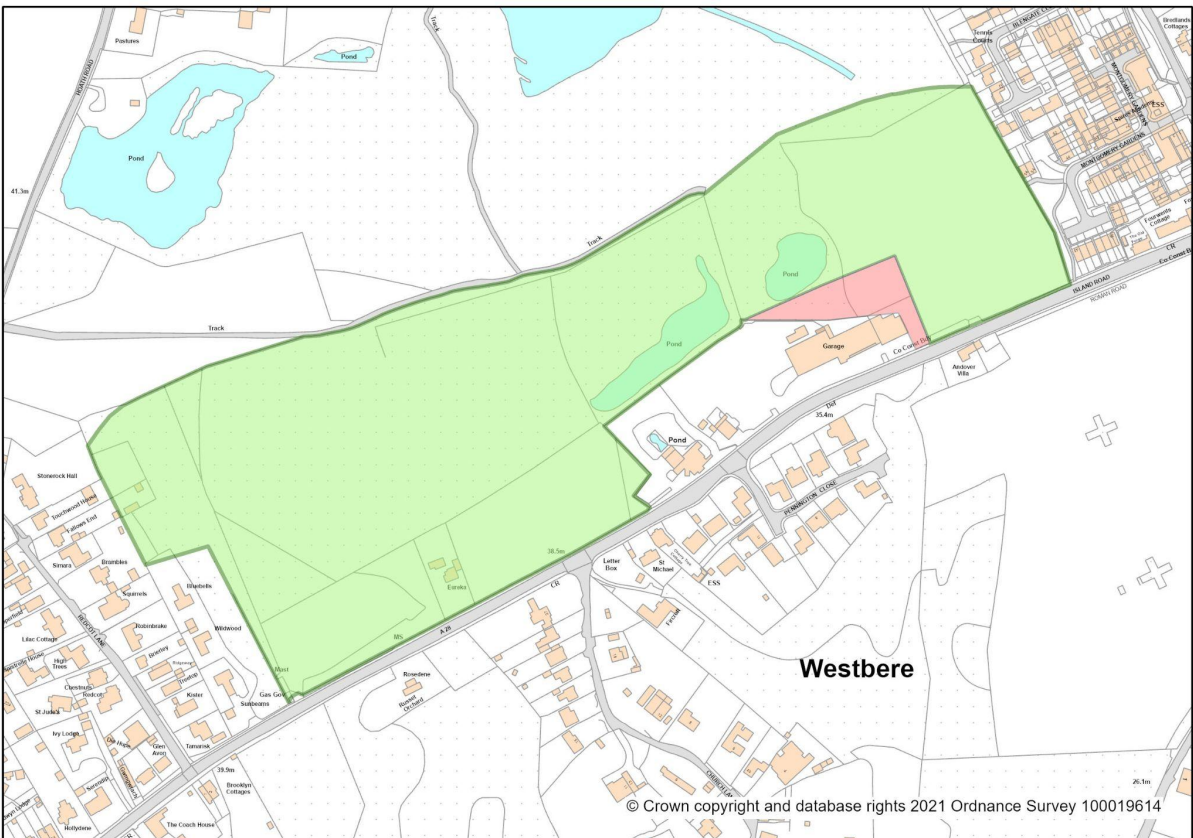


Figure 2: Green Gap between Sturry and Hersden. Area in green is the proposed boundary for the green gap. The red area is proposed to be removed.

2. Local Green Spaces

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to assess whether the Local Green Spaces currently allocated within the adopted Local Plan (2017) still meet the NPPF requirements, as part of the Local Plan review.

National Policy Context

The NPPF sets specific requirements for the consideration of designating land as Local Green Space:

'99. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

100. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- 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.'*

Local Policy Context

The adopted Local Plan (2017) identified a large number of local protections for open spaces and wildlife in the district including, the subject of this element of the report, two Local Green Spaces:

- **Prospect Field, Joy Lane, Whistable**
- **Columbia Avenue Recreation Ground**

These sites were initially assessed within the [Report on Assessments of Local Green Space Proposals in Canterbury District \(April 2014\)](#), along with 17 other sites. This included site visits in January 2014. Further assessments of 8 more sites were conducted in support of the Local Plan in 2016.

Three sites were proposed to the Planning Inspector but only the two within the Local Plan were determined to meet the NPPF criteria.

Methodology

The evaluation form used in the previous assessments was updated and used as the basis for the updated assessment of the Local Green Spaces.

Site visits were carried out on 24 March 2021. A visual and desktop appraisal was made of the Local Green Spaces to see whether they still meet the criteria set in the NPPF, as outlined on the assessment form, and whether any changes had occurred since the original assessment in 2014.

Summary of Outcomes

Further information is available in Appendix B which sets out the detail assessment forms.

Local Green Space	Has anything changed in relation to the use of the site	Does the site still meet the NPPF requirements in paragraph 99	Does the site still meet the NPPF requirements in paragraph 100	Recommendation
Prospect Field, Joy Lane, Whitstable	No planning applications (excluding permission for a wooden seat)	Yes	A - Yes B - Yes C - Yes	Retain as an allocated Local Green Space at existing extent
Columbia Avenue Recreation Ground	No planning applications	Yes	A - Yes B - Yes C - Yes	Retain as an allocated Local Green Space at existing extent

Appendix A: Green Gaps

Green gap between...	Policy	Description	Intersection of LCA and planning policies, recommendations	Changes to boundary or built environment	Other evidence / documents	Recommendation
Urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable	OS7	263.8ha formed of various land uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open fields, green spaces, playing fields, playground and ball court - Multiple roads including Thanet Way and Whitstable Road - Railway line - Wastewater Treatment Works - Waste and recycling facilities - Caravan / Holiday Park - Coast and ponds - Commercial / market space - Dispersed dwellings - Solar panels 	<p>A2: Swalecliffe Coast Landscape has an important function as a Green Gap. Retain at existing extent.</p> <p>C1: Chestfield Gap and Greenhill Landscape has an important function as a gap. Retain at existing extent.</p>	<p>Adjacent to strategic allocation Site 6: Land at Greenhill.</p> <p>Various planning applications have been granted - mainly around existing structures (such as dwellings, the Wastewater Treatment Works and the caravan park).</p>	<p>Local Plan 2017 Inspector Report highlighted that this green gap was slightly different, in terms of education, leisure and allotment uses, but that it reflects the character of these coastal settlements.</p> <p>Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018) seeks green infrastructure improvements, including biodiversity enhancements associated with the provision of football by Tankerton Football Club.</p>	Retain existing Green Gap.
Canterbury and Sturry	OS6	25.7ha formed of various land uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open fields, green spaces, playing fields - River Stour - Railway line - Part of a Wastewater Treatment Works - Some dwellings 	<p>F6: Stour Valley - Sturry and Fordwich Potential to increase the gap in this area - further study required to define the extent of gap.</p> <p>F2: Stour Valley Slopes Important as part of larger</p>	<p>There have been several planning applications granted across the green gap.</p> <p>The biggest change is due to the overlap with Strategic Site 2: Sturry / Broad Oak and the proposed new</p>	<p>Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018) aims to maintain and enhance connectivity in the eastern outskirts of the city, including through the green gap to the River Stour.</p>	Retain existing Green Gap.

		- Commercial / employment space	gap extending south of the railway (F6). Valuable given strategic allocation at Broad Oak.	bypass. Within the Strategic site 2: Sturry masterplan, other than the bypass the rest of the overlap area will remain as open space.		
Sturry and Westbere	OS6	15.3ha mainly a green space with trees. A residential building to the east.	F3: Hersden Ridge Retain at existing extent.	No planning applications		Retain existing green gap, but amend boundary to exclude the building to the east.
Sturry and Hersden	OS6	11.2ha mainly a green space with trees. Additional uses include: - Ponds - Dwelling, residential gardens, and associated outbuildings - County Council depot - Employment / garage	F3: Hersden Ridge Retain at existing extent.	There was a planning application granted to extend the garage.		Retain existing green gap, but amend boundary to exclude new development (in relation to the garage).
Sturry and Broad Oak	OS6	2.9ha mainly an open field and green space with some trees. Additional land uses include: - Sub station - Road	F3: Hersden Ridge Retain at existing extent. F2: Stour Valley Slopes The strategic allocation effectively merges Sturry and Broad Oak. This small gap creates a sense of separation along Herne Bay Road.	The site overlaps with the strategic Site 2: Sturry/ Broad Oak.	Local Plan 2017 Inspector Report highlighted that the site overlaps with strategic Site 2: Sturry / Broad Oak	Retain existing Green Gap.
Blean and Rough Common	OS6	7.3ha formed of various land uses: - Playing fields - Kent Community Oasis	F2: Stour Valley Slopes Retain at existing extent.	No new planning applications since 2013	Local Plan 2017 Inspector Report highlighted that although it is not easily seen from Whitstable Road there	Retain existing Green Gap.

		garden - Sub station - Road			are public footpaths adjacent to it and the gap is limited in size, so retention was justified.	
Canterbury and Tyler Hill	OS6	5.5ha of woods, fields and a pond.	<p>F2: Stour Valley Slopes Consider whether a Green Gap is required in this location, as the gap is between the University campus and properties on Canterbury Hill Road, rather than ensuring the separation of two settlements.</p> <p>E3: Amery Court Farmlands The gap here is very small – equivalent to one field within E3. There is potential to extend the gap to cover fields to the north, plus land within LCA E2 and F2 to the east of Tyler Hill. Further study would be required to define.</p>	No planning applications		Retain existing Green Gap.
Canterbury and Bridge	OS6	282.7ha formed of various land uses: - Open fields and green spaces with some trees - Several roads, including the A2, Roman Road and Bifrons Hill - Multiple dwellings /	<p>H4: Nackington Farmlands Retain at existing extent.</p> <p>Part covered by AONB</p>	Green gap has been subject to various planning allocations, mainly around the existing dispersed dwellings. The green gap is adjacent to strategic allocation Site 1:	Local Plan 2017 Inspector Report highlighted that it overlaps with strategic Site 1: South Canterbury and would ensure adequate separation between settlements. Green Infrastructure Strategy	Retain existing Green Gap.

		buildings dispersed over the area some in clusters, some stand alone - Allotments		South Canterbury.	(2018) seeks to create connections between this green gap and new open space at Stuppington Lane.	
Herne Bay and Reculver	N/A	Coastal Cliffs	A1: Beltinge Consideration of whether a Green Gap is appropriate between Herne Bay and Reculver or if covered by undeveloped coast policy. The undeveloped coast policy provides a similar level of protection.		In the 2017 Local Plan this area is covered by Undeveloped Coast designation and Open Space typologies.	Do not designate as a green gap. The area is already protected under other existing designations such as Undeveloped Coast which remain appropriate.
Herne Common and Herne Bay / Herne	N/A	Ridge of pasture and parkland	E1: Herne Common Further study is required to determine whether a new Green Gap is required between Herne Common and Herne Bay/Herne given strategic allocation extending from the southern edge of Herne Bay south of A299.		The area between Herne Common and Herne is Local Nature Reserve and covered by a Open Space typology.	Do not designate as a green gap. Parts of the area are already protected under other existing designations. Designation not considered necessary through 2017 Local Plan for Strode Farm allocation
Strategic allocation at Cockerling Farm and Chartham	N/A	Sloping large arable fields between small settlements, and flat floodplain of the Great Stour	F1: Stour Valley Sides Further study required to determine whether a new Green Gap is required between the strategic allocation at Cockerling Farm and Chartham. F7: Stour Valley West Further study required to		Larkey Valley Wood is a Local Nature Reserve to the south / east of Cockerling Road, outside LCA F1 and F7.	Do not designate as a green gap. Parts of the area are already protected under other existing designations. Designation not considered necessary through 2017 Local Plan for Cockerling Farm allocation.

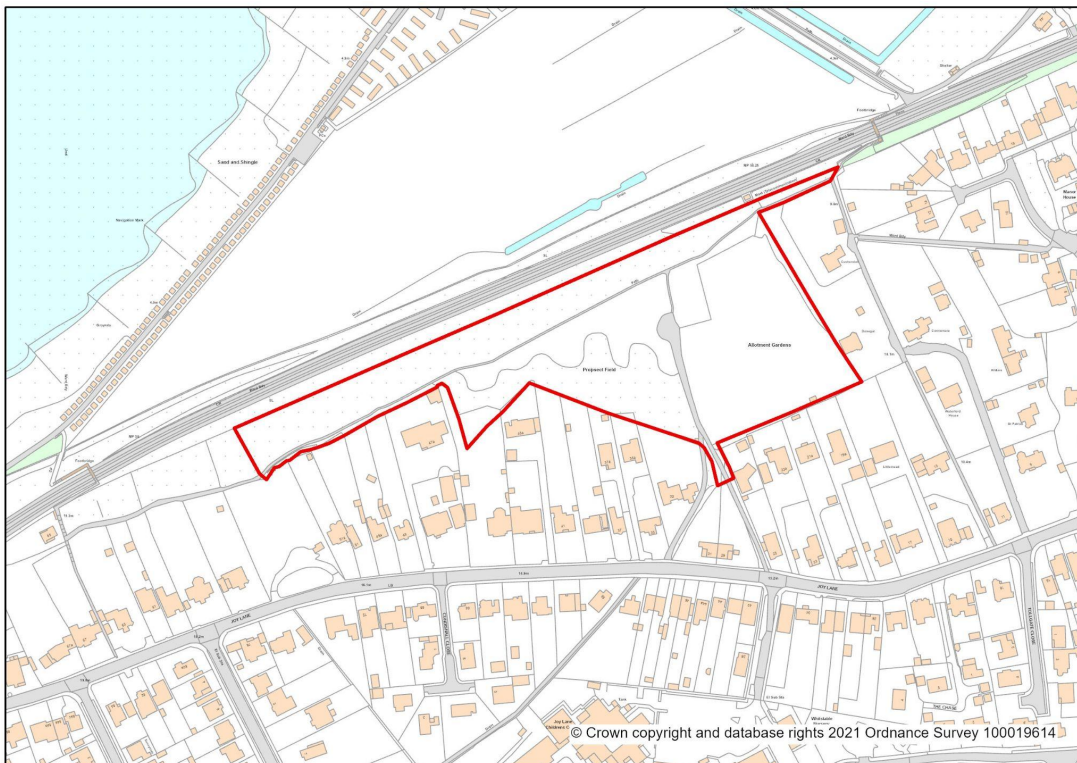
			determine whether a new gap is appropriate with new strategic allocation at Cockerling Farm.			
Canterbury and villages to the east (Littlebourne / Bekesbourne)	N/A	Gently rolling landscape with orchard and hop production and arable fields	H6: Littlebourne Fruit Belt Further study required to determine whether a gap is appropriate between the edge of Canterbury and villages – area around Little Barton Farm and the Hoath.		Trenley Park Wood, Fordwich Local Wildlife Site is to the north / west, slightly outside of LCA H6.	Do not designate as a green gap. This area has not changed since the adoption of the 2017 Local Plan, which did not identify a need for a Green Gap at this location.

Appendix B: Local Green Space Site Assessments

Prospect Field, Joy Lane, Whistable



Aerial Photo



Map showing the existing Local Green Space allocation



View across site to the north west
(including the cycle route)



Prospect Field sign on site



Seating area and informal grassland

Site	Prospect Field, Joy Lane, Whistable	
Size	2.5ha	
Site Description	<p>Unusual shaped piece of land. Mixture of allotments to the east, with some small copses with mixed managed and unmanaged grassland and shrubs to the west. A cycle/pedestrian route runs east to west through the length of the site and beyond this is a bank that slopes down to the railway line that runs along the northern boundary of the site. Beyond this is protection of existing open space that makes up part of the golf club. The residential area abuts the southern and eastern boundaries of the site and to the west are protection of existing open space and the continuation of the coastal cycle route. There are views out to the Thames Estuary and Sheppy.</p> <p>The site has 2 accesses from Joy Lane (including one with vehicle access) there is a small informal car park for the allotment users. The site also links to other areas east and west via the cycle/pedestrian route. The site is managed by a community Friends group for informal recreation and wildlife habitat.</p>	
Local Plan 2017 allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of Existing Open Space - Urban Area (Whistable) - A small amount to the south and east is in a Conservation Area (South Whitstable) 	
Recent planning applications	No - excluding permission for a wooden seat	
Ownership	Council Owned	
	2014 Assessment	2021 Assessment
Can the area endure beyond the Local Plan period? Why?	Yes – is already PEOS, QEII, Allotments However, there have been issues of encroachment by the adjoining residential properties in the last few years.	Yes - It is protected as allotment and green corridor typologies through the Open Space Strategy and it is a Protected Existing Open Space in the 2017 adopted Local Plan. It is also a QEII.
Is it in close proximity (within 400m) to the community it would serve?	Yes	Yes
Does the site have local significance?	Yes – this site has a lot of community input in terms of its protection and management.	Yes – this site has a lot of community input in terms of its protection and management.
- Is it well used by a wide range of	Yes – for picnics, walking, cycling (along cycle route),	Yes – for picnics, walking, dog walkers, joggers and cycling

<p>people from the community?</p> <p>- Is it a multi use space?</p> <p>- Is it currently publicly accessible?</p>	<p>there is a small area mowed grass area for informal recreation.</p> <p>The allotments are also well used.</p>	<p>(along cycle route). There is a small area of mowed grass for informal recreation.</p> <p>The allotments are also well used.</p>
<p>- Is it beautiful? (attractive with high visual amenity)</p>	<p>Yes very – with semi-natural habitat and extensive views.</p>	<p>Yes very – with semi-natural habitat and extensive views.</p>
<p>- Does it have historic significance?</p>	<p>Not particularly, however the footpath that runs through the site is shown on early maps as far back as 1843. The area where the allotments are may have housed a couple of railway cottages. The land seems to be linked to the railway line on earlier maps of the area.</p>	<p>Not particularly, however the footpath that runs through the site is shown on early maps as far back as 1843. The area where the allotments are may have housed a couple of railway cottages. The land seems to be linked to the railway line on earlier maps of the area.</p>
<p>- Does it have recreation value? (formally or informally)</p>	<p>Yes – for informal recreation and cycling/walking. The allotments in the east of the site area are obviously well used and have substantial protections of their own.</p>	<p>Yes – for informal recreation and cycling/walking. The allotments in the east of the site area are well used.</p>
<p>- Is it tranquil?</p>	<p>Yes very – lovely peaceful area away from traffic and domestic noise. Does get some noise from the trains that run below.</p>	<p>Yes – there is some noise from the trains that run below and the nearby road traffic. However, the area is away from the road with trees acting as a buffer. Bird calls are prominent creating a peaceful area.</p>
<p>- Does the site have wildlife / biodiversity value?</p>	<p>Yes - Community managed grassland featuring invertebrate, reptile, stag beetle, nesting bird habitat</p>	<p>Yes - Community managed grassland featuring invertebrate, reptile, stag beetle, nesting bird habitat</p>
<p>Is the site local in character? (not extensive)</p>	<p>Yes – small semi-natural site managed and used by the local community.</p>	<p>Yes – small semi-natural site managed and used by the local community.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>		
<p>2014: Should it be designated as local Green Space or not? Why?</p>	<p>The site complies with NPPF Para's 76 and 77, it is already protection of existing open space, QEII, publicly available, beautiful, tranquil and well used, as well as providing significant wildlife habitat. The site is demonstrably special to the</p>	

	local community, shown by the high community involvement with the site including a Local Friends group set up to manage the site. Recommend allocation of the site as Local Green Space.
2021: Recommendation	Retain as an allocated Local Green Space at existing extent



View of the playground to the south-east of the site

View across site to the south



Views across the site to the north

Site	Columbia Avenue Recreation Ground	
Size	1.6ha	
Site Description	<p>Public recreation field in the middle of a modern residential development. The entire park is fenced and on a sloping hillside (down from south to north). Open grassed playing field, with a terraced playground in the top southeastern corner. There are wildlife gardens and trees to the north and east and in the southwestern corner. There are also a number of picnic tables and seats provided.</p> <p>The site is well overlooked by surrounding houses on three sides with Columbia Avenue running along the western boundary. There are a number of sealed paths across and around the park that connect up to the adjacent streets providing pedestrian access to the park from Sceptre Way, Norview Road, Sandpiper Road as well as Columbia Avenue.</p>	
Local Plan 2017 allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of Existing Open Space - Urban Area (Whistable) 	
Recent planning applications	No	
Ownership	Council Owned	
	2014 Assessment	2021 Assessment
Can the area endure beyond the Local Plan period? Why?	Yes – it has been a protected playing field/green space since the houses were built and it is Protected Existing Open Space.	Yes – it has been a protected green space since the houses were built. It is protected as amenity and play area typologies through the Open Space Strategy and it is a Protected Existing Open Space in the 2017 adopted Local Plan.
Is it in close proximity (within 400m) to the community it would serve?	Yes – surrounded by houses.	Yes – surrounded by houses.
Does the site have local significance?	Yes	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it well used by a wide range of people from the community? - Is it a multi use space? 	<p>Yes - The site was being well used by children, dog walkers and as a walking shortcut when visited.</p> <p>Public Park</p>	<p>Yes - The site is well used by children, dog walkers and a connection / corridor between different areas.</p>

- Is it currently publicly accessible?		
- Is it beautiful? (attractive with high visual amenity)	Yes - a very attractive park with spectacular views over the Thames Estuary	Yes - a very attractive park with spectacular views over the Thames Estuary.
- Does it have historic significance?	None – formally a field until recent housing development of the area. A public footpath is shown as having run along the eastern boundary of the site on maps as early as 1843.	None – formally a field until recent housing development of the area. A public footpath is shown as having run along the eastern boundary of the site on maps as early as 1843.
- Does it have recreation value? (formally or informally)	Yes – playground, dog walking and training and an informal kick about area, walking paths.	Yes – playground, dog walking and training and an informal kick about area, walking paths.
- Is it tranquil?	Yes very – in the context of a suburban park	Yes – in the context of a suburban park.
- Does the site have wildlife / biodiversity value?	Amenity grassland featuring some scrub habitat – potential for nesting birds and reptiles.	Amenity grassland featuring some scrub habitat – potential for nesting birds and reptiles.
Is the site local in character? (not extensive)	Yes - very much serving the local community	Yes - it is relatively small and serves the local community.
Recommendations		
2014: Should it be designated as local Green Space or not? Why?	Complies with NPPF Para's 76 and 77, already protection of existing open space, publicly available, attractive and well used for recreation by the community, As well as providing some wildlife habitat. Recommend allocation of the site as Local Green Space	
2021: Recommendation	Retain as an allocated Local Green Space at existing extent	