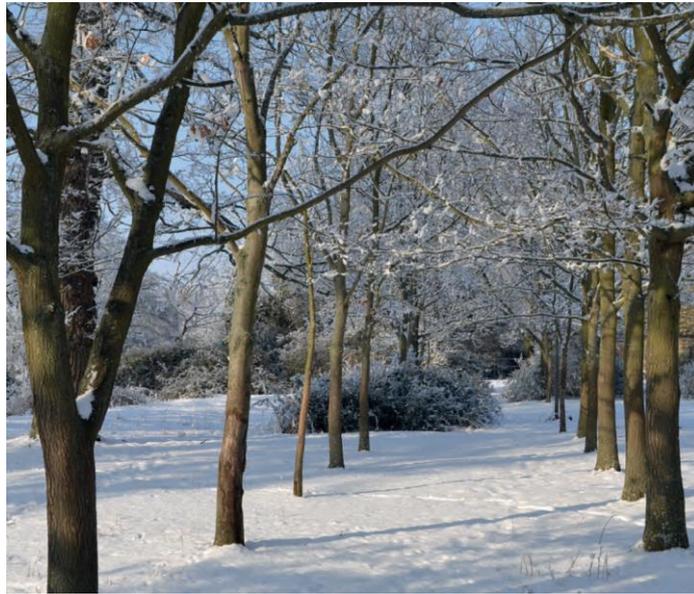


# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



## Local Green Spaces Evidence

September 2023



# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

## Local Green Spaces Evidence September 2023

Submission of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Regulation 15 of Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012



The Parish Council received professional planning support from NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK during the production of this Neighbourhood Plan.



NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK

For any general query relating to the Neighbourhood Plan contact:

Parish Clerk: Karen Peck

Telephone: 01353 741066

Email: [clerk@mepalparish.org](mailto:clerk@mepalparish.org)

Website Contact Form: <https://www.mepalparish.org/contact/#>

For consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan contact:

Email: [mnhp@mepalparish.org](mailto:mnhp@mepalparish.org)

<https://www.mepalparish.org/mepal-neighbourhood-plan/>

# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



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# Introduction

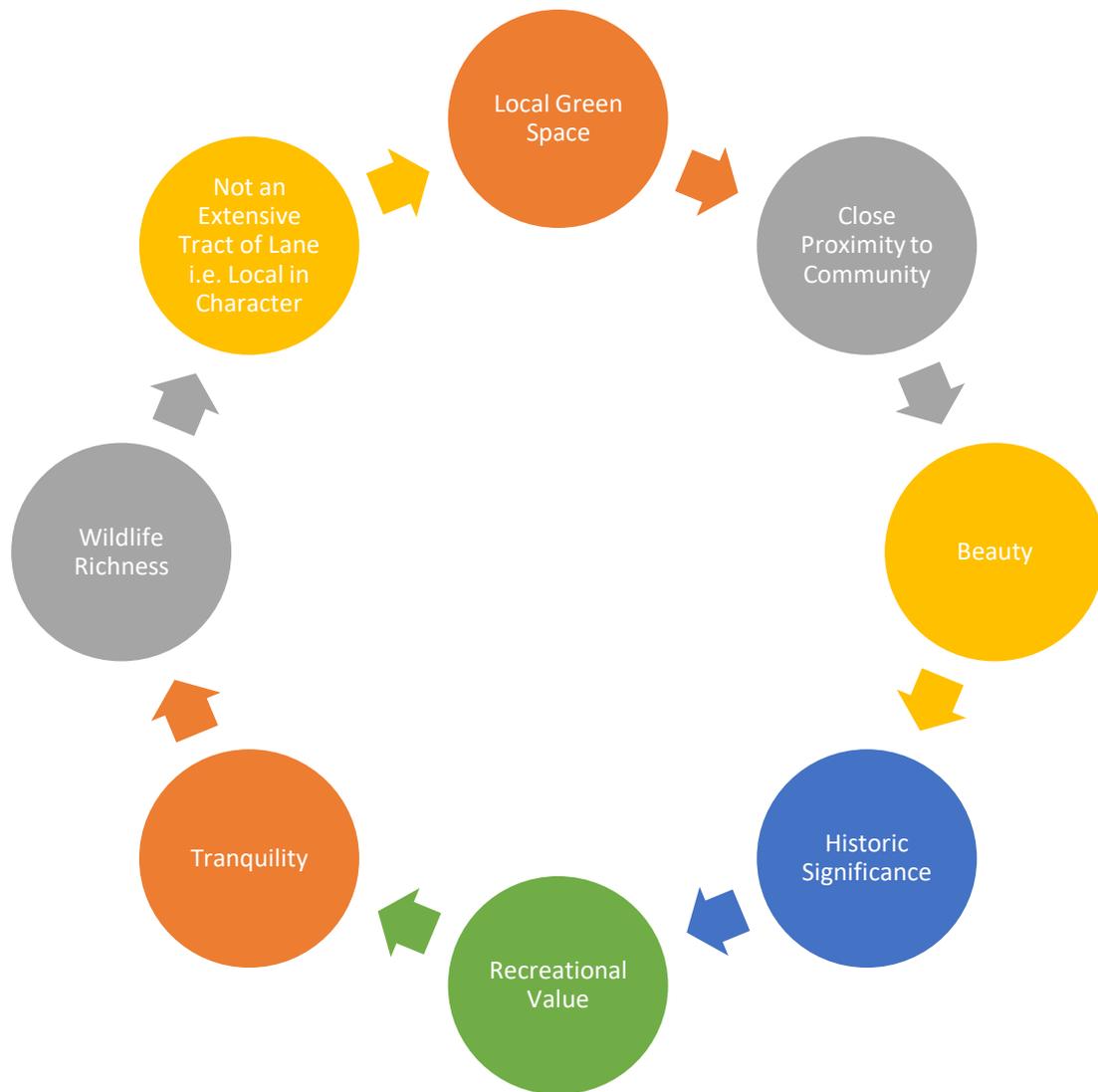
1. In 2012, the Government introduced a new designation of Local Green Space through the NPPF allowing local communities to put forward green areas of particular importance to them for protection. Once designated, planning permission will only be granted for the development of the sites in very special circumstances or if the development clearly enhances the Local Green Space for the purposes it was designated.
2. The sites listed in the policy in the Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed as according with the criteria for Local Green Space as set out in the NPPF as detailed further under the Background section below. A tabular assessment of each of the designated Local Green Spaces against the criteria set out in the NPPF, together with a brief summary of each of the areas is set out in the Local Green Spaces Evidence Document (this document) which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan.

# Background

3. Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:
  - where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
  - where the green area is 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
  - where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
4. A total of 12 potential sites were identified by the Steering Group for possible designation as Local Green Space. The initial assessment process was by undertaken by NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK on behalf of the Steering Group.

# Brief for Assessment Process

5. The appointed planning consultant who assisted the Steering Group and Parish Council to produce the Neighbourhood Plan provided the Steering Group with a brief to undertake the assessment process, this included a standard Proforma for completion. The brief is included at Appendix 1.



## Scoping - Initial Assessment Process

6. The initial assessment process was undertaken, this included scoping open green spaces within both the village and the wider Parish. This resulted in 12 potential green spaces for consideration through the refinement process. Maps to illustrate their locations is included later in this document.
7. The 12 sites considered in the refinement process were:
  - A. Lilibet Woods & Brangehill Drive
  - B. Meadow Way Green
  - C. Land at School Lane
  - D. Cemetery
  - E. St Mary's Churchyard
  - F. Land at High Street
  - G. Land at Laurel Close
  - H. The Green
  - I. Ouse Washes
  - J. Allotments
  - K. Recreation Ground (inc. Play Area)
  - L. Former Mepal Outdoor Centre

# Refinement Process



8. As a starting point each of the 12 identified potential green spaces (LGS) were considered against existing designations and other proposed policies of the Neighbourhood Plan (Step 1) to ascertain what additional value Local Green Space designation could bring:

Potential LGS	Within Settlement or Countryside	Existing Environmental Designations	Existing Heritage Designations	Covered by Other Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Policies
A. Lilibet Woods & Brangehill Drove	Countryside	---	---	N/A
B. Meadow Way Green	Settlement	---	---	Play Area in centre protected under Policy 2 as a community asset
C. Land at School Lane	Settlement	---	---	N/A
D. Cemetery	Countryside	---	---	N/A
E. St Mary's Churchyard	Countryside	---	Grade II* Listed Building	N/A

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence

F. Land at High Street	Settlement	---	---	War Memorial is protected under Policy 6 as a non-designated heritage asset
G. Land at Laurel Close	Settlement	---	---	War Memorial is protected under Policy 6 as a non-designated heritage asset
H. The Green	Settlement	---	---	N/A
I. Ouse Washes	Countryside	SAC, SPA, Ramsar, SSSI & Flood Zone	---	Mepal Bridge & Mepal (Fortrey's Hall) Pumping Station, Engine Bank are protected under Policy 6 as a non-designated heritage asset
J. Allotments	Settlement	---	---	Protected under Policy 2 as a community asset
K. Recreation Ground (inc. Play Area)	Settlement	---	---	Protected under Policy 2 as a community asset
L. Former Mepal Outdoor centre	Countryside	Flood Zone	---	N/A

### Step 1

9. As a first sift it was considered that just one potential LGS should be excluded as a consequence of their existing environmental designation, namely the Ouse Washes (Site I) which are subject to numerous existing environmental designations. LGS is principally an environmental designation and it should not duplicate other designations which seek to achieve a broadly similar purpose.
10. Also, one of the potential LGS sites, St Mary's Churchyard (Site E) is covered by an existing heritage designation as being the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Building. Although principally a built environment designation the Listed Building designation potentially gives a degree of protection to open areas as part of their contribution to the significance, setting, character and appearance of the Listed Building. Although physically separate the Cemetery (Site D) is considered to be part of the setting of the St Mary's Church Grade II\* Listed Building, as such it is considered to benefit from a degree of protection as part of their contribution to the significance, setting, character and appearance of the Listed Building.
11. A total of two potential LGS sites (Site J - Allotments & Site K - Recreation Ground (inc. Play Area) are completely covered by protection under Policy 2 which seeks to protect community assets. At the draft plan stage it was considered best for these areas to be protected by that policy rather than LGS designation as LGS designation could potentially preclude built development such as halls, pavilions, scoreboards or play equipment. As such this could undermine their role as community assets.
12. This first sift therefore removes the following five sites:

- D. Cemetery
- E. St Mary's Churchyard
- I. Ouse Washes
- J. Allotment
- K. Recreation Ground (inc. Play Area)

13. The Meadow Way Green has a play area in the centre protected as a community asset, however, this is only a small part of a wider space that has the feeling of a 'village green' and is therefore worthy of protection as a potential LGS.

## Step 2

14. As Step 2 the remaining seven potential LGS sites were assessed to determine if any constitute an extensive tract of land. All the sites are relatively small in geographic nature except for the potential LGS at the Former Mepal Outdoor Centre (Site L). Had the Ouse Washes not already been discounted in Step 1, it would have been discounted at this step as an extensive tract of land.
15. Planning Practice Guidance provides advice on this aspect, it states: *"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 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework 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."*
16. The potential LGS at the Former Mepal Outdoor Centre measures approximately 12.5 hectares, it does not however encircle the settlement and in fact is an enclosed site. Nonetheless it is large when considered in relation to the size of the community of Mepal. The main core of the village only measures around 30 hectares so the Former Mepal Outdoor Centre is large in the context of Mepal as the host settlement.
17. As such it is considered to fall to be deemed potentially as an extensive tract of land, which in our assessment is referred to as the criterion (is it) 'Local in Character'? Although the judgement of what constitutes an extensive tract of land is a subjective matter.
18. Only one potential remaining LGS site is therefore considered to represent an extensive tract of land having regard to the advice in Planning Practice Guidance and the size of the overall host settlement and the wider context. As such only one site (Former Mepal Outdoor Centre Site L) is discounted at this stage.

## Step 3

19. Under Step 3 the remaining six proposed LGS were assessed by the appointed planning consultant to determine whether they 'Demonstrate Special Significance' to the community. This is considered against the 5 headings of: Beauty; Historic Significance; Recreational Value; Tranquillity; and Wildlife Richness.

Site	Demonstrably Special Significance				
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness
A. Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Meadow Way Green	✓	x	✓	x	x
C. Land at School Lane	✓	x	x	✓	✓
F. Land at High Street	✓	✓	x	✓	x
G. Land at Laurel Close	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
H. The Green	✓	✓	✓	x	✓

20. In relation to the factors above, there are no sites considered not to demonstrably meet any of the defined LGS criteria.

#### Step 4

21. Under Step 4 the remaining six proposed LGS were assessed to determine whether they meet the general purpose and intention of Local Green Space designation as set out in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance. The remaining six proposed LGS are all considered to meet the intention of LGS designation and are therefore proposed to be taken forward into the Regulation 14 Plan.

#### Outcome

22. The table below summarises the outcome of the step-by-step review process:

Summary of Assessment						
Site	Scoping	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Proposed Local Green Space
A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D	✓					
E	✓					
F	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
I	✓					
J	✓					
K	✓					
L	✓	✓				

## Proposed Local Green Space in Draft Neighbourhood Plan

23. The 6 proposed LGS for designation put forward in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan were therefore:

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence

In the draft Neighbourhood Plan the following sites were suggested for designation as Local Green Spaces and are identified on the Map below:

- Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drive
- Meadow Way Green
- Land at School Lane
- Land at High Street
- Land at Laurel Close
- The Green



Map - Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright

 Local Green Spaces

 Plan Area Boundary

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence



Map - Discounted Potential LGS Sites at the Draft Neighbourhood Plan Stage © Crown Copyright

★ Areas Considered but Discounted as Local Green Spaces



Map - Discounted Potential LGS Sites at the Draft Neighbourhood Plan Stage © Crown Copyright

★ Areas Considered but Discounted as Local Green Spaces

## Public Consultation on Proposed Local Green Spaces

24. The 6 proposed LGS for designation were put forward in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan for public consultation. No concerns were expressed in relation to the proposed sites. A local resident suggested including four sections of hedgerows/trees as LGS. However, these are not green spaces as such but are habitats for biodiversity that are already included within the scope of Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm. As such no changes have been made in response to that representation.

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence

25. East Cambridgeshire District Council made a representation as follows: *“Whilst ECDC primarily leaves it to the PC to determine which sites it considers are suitable for LGS status, we were surprised two specific sites are not put forward as LGS sites: the recreational ground and the land known locally as ‘Church Field’ (land immediately north of the settlement boundary, but still within a central location in the village). Both such sites have considerable well documented ‘value’ to the local community, and would appear to meet at least some, if not, all the LGS criterion.”*
26. Discussions were held with the District Council, with regard to the Recreation Ground it is an area which is demonstrably special to the local community, and it will endure beyond the plan period because it is protected by a covenant preventing non-community development. The Recreation Ground at the draft plan stage had been sifted out purely on the basis that it is protected by other policies. However, as discussed with the District Council protection as a community asset doesn’t preclude protection as LGS as well and LGS protection is a stronger form of protection than protection for community assets.
27. Consequently, reflecting upon the representation and discussions the Recreation Ground is to be included in the Submission Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space. Given that the Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments form a contiguous green space it is appropriate for the LGS to cover these three constituent parts in a single LGS. As the Parish Council are the owners of these facilities, there are no issues associated with giving owners early notification as Planning Practice Guidance envisages. Although quite a large overall area it is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
28. In relation to Church Field, that area provides an important recreational route by virtue of the public footpath across it to/from the Grade II\* Listed Church. There is an important view and vista across this area identified in Policy 7 and it makes an important contribution to the setting of the Church and the village. It is an area which is demonstrably special to the local community, and it could endure beyond the plan period. It was not an area considered in the original assessment process and introducing it at the Submission stage would pose some practical difficulties in providing early notification to owners (in this case believed to be the Church Commissioners) as Planning Practice Guidance envisages.
29. Accordingly, whilst there is merit in the suggestion made by the District Council, it is considered that a policy framework for Church Field could form part of an enhanced policy approach towards protecting local character. Addressing local character was raised in other representations and as part of the overall policy suite it is considered that Church Field forms an integral part of the setting of the village which is to be addressed by a new Policy 8 on Local Character. Therefore, Church Field has not been identified as Local Green Space.

## Final Local Green Spaces

30. The 7 final LGS for designation to be included in the Submission Neighbourhood Plan are therefore:

In the Submission Neighbourhood Plan the following sites are designated as Local Green Spaces and are identified on the Maps below:

- Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove (LW)
- Meadow Way Green (MW)
- Land at School Lane (SL)
- Land at High Street (HS)
- Land at Laurel Close (LC)
- The Green (TG)

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence

- Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments (RG)

Site	Demonstrably Special Significance				
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness
Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Way Green	✓	x	✓	x	x
Land at School Lane	✓	x	x	✓	✓
Land at High Street	✓	✓	x	✓	x
Land at Laurel Close	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments	✓	x	✓	✓	✓



Map a - Final Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright

Local Green Spaces

Plan Area Boundary

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence



Map b - Final Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright

 Local Green Spaces

 Plan Area Boundary

*Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence*

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# Appendix 1 - Brief for Assessment Process

## Local Green Space

Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is 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
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

To help take this matter forward I've set out three aspects:

1. The Government Published Planning Practice Guidance;
2. A Proforma to be completed for Each Proposed Local Green Space; and
3. Examples from another Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Green Space could be used on areas already designated, if we think (and can argue) that additional benefit would arise.

## Planning Practice Guidance on Local Green Space

The Government has published Planning Practice Guidance in the form of questions and answers, which I've repeated below to help you understand key elements of the purpose of Local Green Space:

### **What is Local Green Space designation?**

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

### **How does Local Green Space designation relate to development?**

Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans 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.

### **What if land has planning permission for development?**

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.

### **Can all communities benefit from Local Green Space?**

Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town or city.

### **What types of green area can be identified as Local Green Space?**

The green area will need to meet the criteria set out in paragraph 100 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, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis.

**How close does a Local Green Space need to be to the community it serves?**

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.

**How big can a Local Green Space be?**

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 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework 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.

**Is there a minimum area?**

Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space.

**What about public access?**

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 landowners, whose legal rights must be respected.

**Does land need to be in public ownership?**

A Local Green Space does not need to be in public ownership. However, the local planning authority (in the case of local plan making) or the qualifying body (in the case of neighbourhood plan making) 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.

**Would designation place any restrictions or obligations on landowners?**

Designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners.

**Who will manage Local Green Space?**

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.

*Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence*

Proforma to be completed for Each Proposed Local Green Space

Proposed Local Green Space Name:

Owner if Known:

Has the Owner Been Contacted: Yes/No

Close Proximity	Demonstrably Special Significance					Local in Character
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness	
✓						✓

Beauty: Yes/No - Why?

Historic Significance: Yes/No - Why?

Recreational Value: Yes/No - Why?

Tranquillity: Yes/No - Why?

Wildlife Richness: Yes/No - Why?

General Description of the Local Green Space:

Ideally if you can draw a boundary on a map this would be helpful to allow me to better understand the proposed Local Green Space.



*Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence*

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# Appendix 2 - Final Local Green Space Descriptions

## Description of Local Green Spaces

Site	Demonstrably Special Significance				
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness
Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Way Green	✓	x	✓	x	x
Land at School Lane	✓	x	x	✓	✓
Land at High Street	✓	✓	x	✓	x
Land at Laurel Close	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments	✓	x	✓	✓	✓

### Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove

Lilibet Woods is the narrow piece of land than runs between Brangehill Drove (Footpath/Byway at the back of Meadow Way) and the A142. Brangehill Grove and Lilibet Woods are owned by Mepal Parish Council. The Footway/Byway give the opportunity for recreational value and tranquillity for local residents. The trees offer important ecological habitat. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation. It forms a green buffer between the village and the A142 and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.



### Meadow Way Green

It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It is crossed by a defined footway and links via a footpath to Brangehill Drove, it is part of a natural circular walk on public footpaths around the western side of the village. It has a formal play area at the centre which is protected as a community asset.

### Land at School Lane

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the village sign and forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A mature tree is located within the land which makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contributes to ecological habitat.



### Land at High Street

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the war memorial cross which has historical significance. It also forms

## *Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Evidence*

part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A small tree is located within the land which offers the potential to make a future important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribution to ecological habitat when it is more mature.

### Land at Laurel Close

This is a multi-functional green space, the area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the rose garden war memorial which has historical significance. It also forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.

### The Green

The Green is marked on the 1885 OS Map and hasn't changed shape over time, it does unusually have a property within one corner. The area forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.

### Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments

This overall area comprises the Recreation Ground, adjacent Play Area and Allotments, these collectively form a contiguous network of green space. It provides the opportunity for both informal recreation and formal recreation. It makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and the setting of the overall village. It contains a number of mature trees and hedgerows around the boundaries and at the northern end which also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat. It provides an important community asset. The Community Pavilion, car park and the adjacent area surrounding are excluded from the Local Green Space in order to prevent LGS designation impacting on future expansion of built facilities or car parking if this becomes necessary. In this way the area of the LGS is capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period whilst providing flexibility for the Community Pavilion to develop to meet changing community needs if necessary in coming decades.



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# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

## Local Green Spaces Evidence September 2023

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal produced in  
accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General)  
Regulations 2012



<https://www.mepalparish.org/mepal-neighbourhood-plan/>

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