

SOHAM AND BARWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Local Green Spaces Assessment

Final Version

14th March 2024

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide maps and basic information about sites recommended for Local Green Space designation in the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan (Policy SBNP13).

All of the suggested sites were proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, through community consultation and views were sought at a community consultation event in June 2021. The consultation resulted in 119 responses. Landowners of the proposed sites will be given the opportunity to comment on the proposals ahead of the Regulation 14 consultation in accordance with national guidance. This report will be updated to take on board, as appropriate, any views expressed during that engagement process.

This report sets out the methodology and rationale that has been used to assess and select the preferred sites for Local Green Space (LGS) designation in the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan which is consistent with East Cambridgeshire District Council's approach to Local Green Spaces in its report Local Green Spaces dated November 2017.

What are Local Green Spaces?

Local Green Space is a national designation that has been introduced by the Government through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Local communities have the opportunity through the development of the Neighbourhood Plans to identify green areas for special protection that are particularly important to them. NPPF states:

Para 101. 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.

Para 102. 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.

Para 103. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

Methodology

This report considers the appropriateness of specific spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan Area for designation as LGS when assessed against paragraphs 101 and 102 of the NPPF. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on behalf of Soham Town Council has reviewed each site and has considered whether the designation would meet the basic conditions required of Neighbourhood Plans.

As part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, Soham Town Council undertook a series of Forums, consultations and engagement events to establish what were the key areas of concern for local residents. This showed that the protection of the town's open spaces, green spaces, recreation grounds, allotments and commons was a high priority for residents. Residents appreciate the peace and tranquillity, the rural setting and natural beauty of their environment both for recreation and their importance for wildlife and biodiversity.

The consultation and community engagement included the presentation of the list of Local Green Spaces at a public event at the Pavillion in June 2021 where the views of members of the community were sought on the proposed Local Green Spaces.

The Neighbourhood Plan working group has taken on board the explanation of the NPPG criteria for designating Local Green Spaces as set out in East Cambridgeshire's Local Green Spaces Report November 2017. It states:

Local Green Space Criteria	Explanation
1. Are in close proximity to the community they serve	The NPPF does not define 'close proximity'. We consider that Local Green Space should be in easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and must not be isolated or distant from communities
2. Are local in character and not an extensive tract of land	The NPPF doesn't define what is considered to be 'an extensive tract of land'. We have not set a specific size limit for Local Green Spaces. However, blanket designations of swathes of open countryside adjacent to settlements or long distance linear routes would not be appropriate.
3. Demonstrably special to the local community because of its: a. Beauty b. Historic significance c. Recreational value d. Tranquillity e. Richness of its wildlife	For an open space to be designated as a Local Green Space it must meet at least one of the demonstrably special criteria: Beauty: enhances local character, adds to the setting of a building or groups of buildings; Historic significance: listed building near or on area/open space, provide the setting of and/or views of listed building or historic assets such as a war memorial whose

	<p>setting needs protecting. Also, historic landscape features, such as ancient trees or old hedgerows;</p> <p>Recreational value: play area, allotments, informal spaces in housing estates, sports and playing fields (not already covered by a designation);</p> <p>Tranquillity: spaces that are calm and allow for quiet enjoyment and reflection;</p> <p>Richness of its wildlife: provides for biodiversity, geodiversity, known protected species, and/or priority habitats; Further explanation of how we will assess sites against the demonstrably special criteria is provided below.</p>
<p>4. Consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.</p>	<p>Local Green Space designations are not normally appropriate for sites with existing planning permission/allocated in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan for other uses unless it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space can be incorporated within the site as part of the development.</p>

The Local Green Spaces Report goes on to explain:

In relation to the five ‘demonstrably special’ criteria set out in criterion 3 (Table 1), the Strategic Planning Team will consider the following:

Beauty

Whether an open space is beautiful can be open to interpretation. Assessment against this criterion will take into account:

- The visual attractiveness of the site as a whole;
- The contribution the site makes to landscape or townscape character and local distinctiveness;
- The contribution the site makes to the physical form and layout of a settlement or neighbourhood.
- Whether the site offers long views through or beyond a settlement or neighbourhood or views of locally valued landmarks.

Historic Significance

The assessment of historic significance will be informed by consideration of:

- Whether the site provides a setting for heritage assets or other locally valued landmarks;
- Whether the site contains any historical features, such as ancient trees;
- Whether the site is associated with a historical figure or event
- Whether there are any regular, historical events such as a village fete that are regularly held on the site;

- The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.

Recreational Value

Most open spaces will meet this criterion. In general, sites should offer a variety of recreational opportunities, formal or informal.

Tranquillity

The Tranquillity Map prepared by the CPRE will be used to identify whether a site is located in an area that can be described as tranquil. Sites need to demonstrate a feeling of remoteness and quiet contemplation for the majority of the site and a general lack of artificial noise such as road traffic or nearby industry.

Richness of Wildlife

Many open spaces offer some benefit to wildlife. For a site to meet this criterion, there must be evidence that it is rich in wildlife, such as records, ecological evidence or expert advice. Sites already designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, National or Local Nature Reserve will not be considered appropriate for LGS designation as these are considered to be adequately protected by national legislation and other policies in the plan. Other sites to be considered could:

- Include a priority habitat as defined in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Include important landscape features, such as veteran trees, ancient woodland or ancient hedgerows;

Consistency with sustainable development

The sites have been assessed to ensure that there are no relevant planning permissions or allocations which preclude the protection of the area as a Local Green Space.

There are examples in Soham where important green spaces have been lost to other uses, including to housing allocations, despite statutory protections such as land being identified as Allotments, Common Land, or sites with specific biodiversity and wildlife protections. In short, other statutory and policy tools have not provided the security or protections needed and have resulted in development and loss of important green areas.

Discussions with East Cambridgeshire District Council policy officers have suggested that there are additional benefits of securing protection on such spaces including the Commons given the changes that have occurred to the boundaries of the Common, the impacts of development and development proposals on the Commons and the need to ensure their longer term management. Additionally, existing planning policy proposes the relocation of allotments within a mixed use allocation in Soham on the Eastern Gateway. Following discussions on this site, the allotments are to be retained in situ. For this reason existing, productive and well used allotments are identified as Local Green Spaces. This approach is consistent with National Guidance on the designation of Local Green Spaces (Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 37-011-20140306) which makes it clear that different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes. When considering additional protection, the LGS

assessment are considered to provide an additional local benefit by an additional designation as a Local Green Space.

Each of the proposed sites has been mapped against the NPPF and East Cambridgeshire criteria and its recommendations are included in the tables below.

Designations

Soham Town Council agreed that the following sites satisfy the criteria for Local Green Spaces as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. These sites should be included in the Regulation 14 Draft of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan as Local Green Space. Each site is shown on the map below and a summary of the assessment is detailed in the following table:

1. Berrycroft Allotments
2. Weatherall Allotments
3. The Cemetery
4. St Andrews Church closed churchyard
5. Recreation Ground
6. Drayton Meadows
7. Moat Closes
8. Qua Fen Common Parts 1 and 2
9. East Fen Common Parts 1, 2 and 3
10. Angle Common
11. South Horse Fen Common
12. North Horse Fen Common
13. Mereside
14. Broadpiece

The Neighbourhood Plan Group notified individual landowners in July 2023 to advise them of the proposed Local Green Spaces designation in the Neighbourhood Plan providing them with the opportunity to review the assessment relevant to their land and to provide feedback to the NPG ahead of the Regulation 14 consultation. Any comments received have been reviewed and discussed before finalising the list of Local Green Spaces for Regulation 14 consultation.

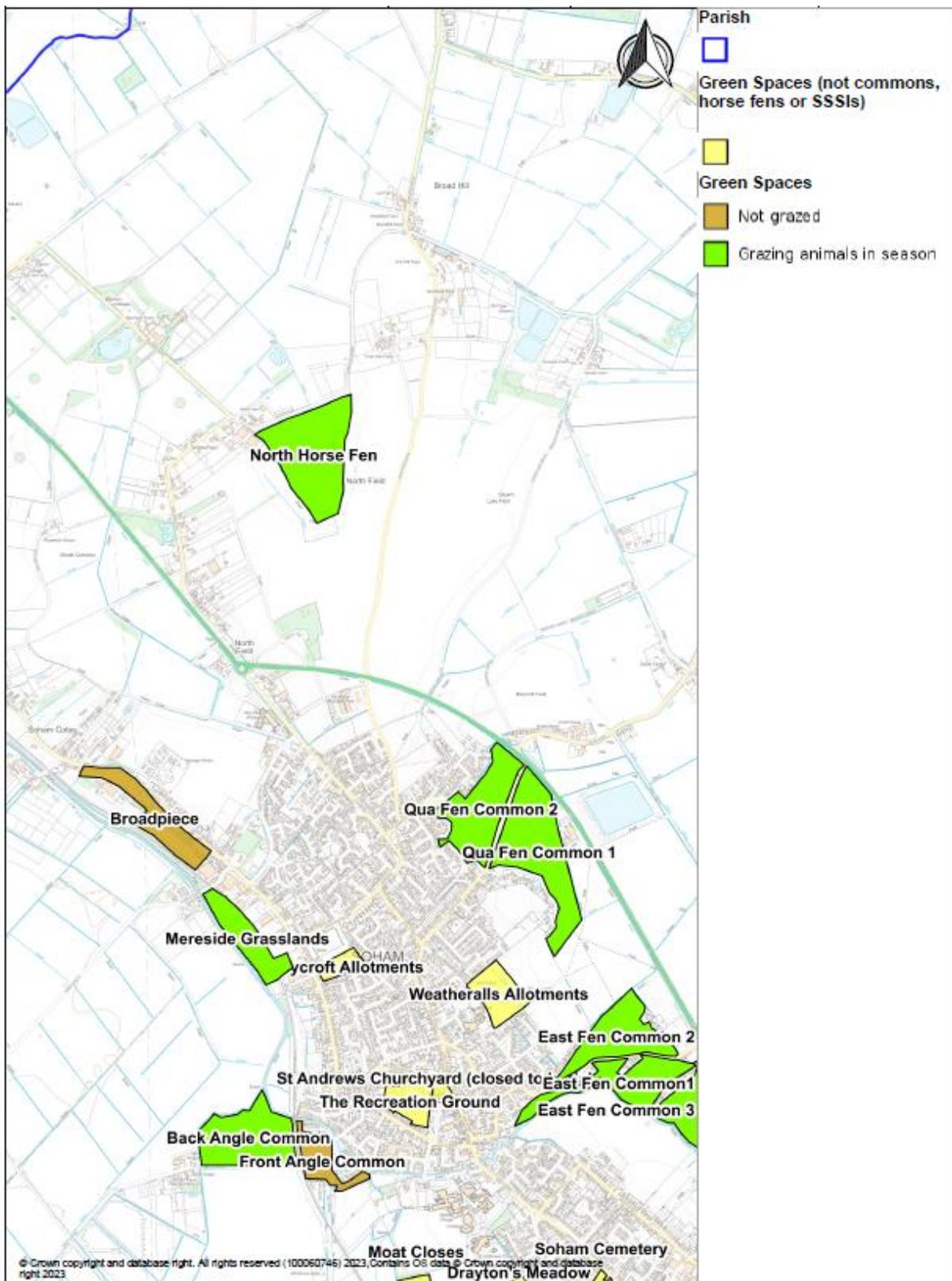
The recreation space at Soham Village College was assessed but are considered not to comply with the NPPF criteria for Local Green Spaces.

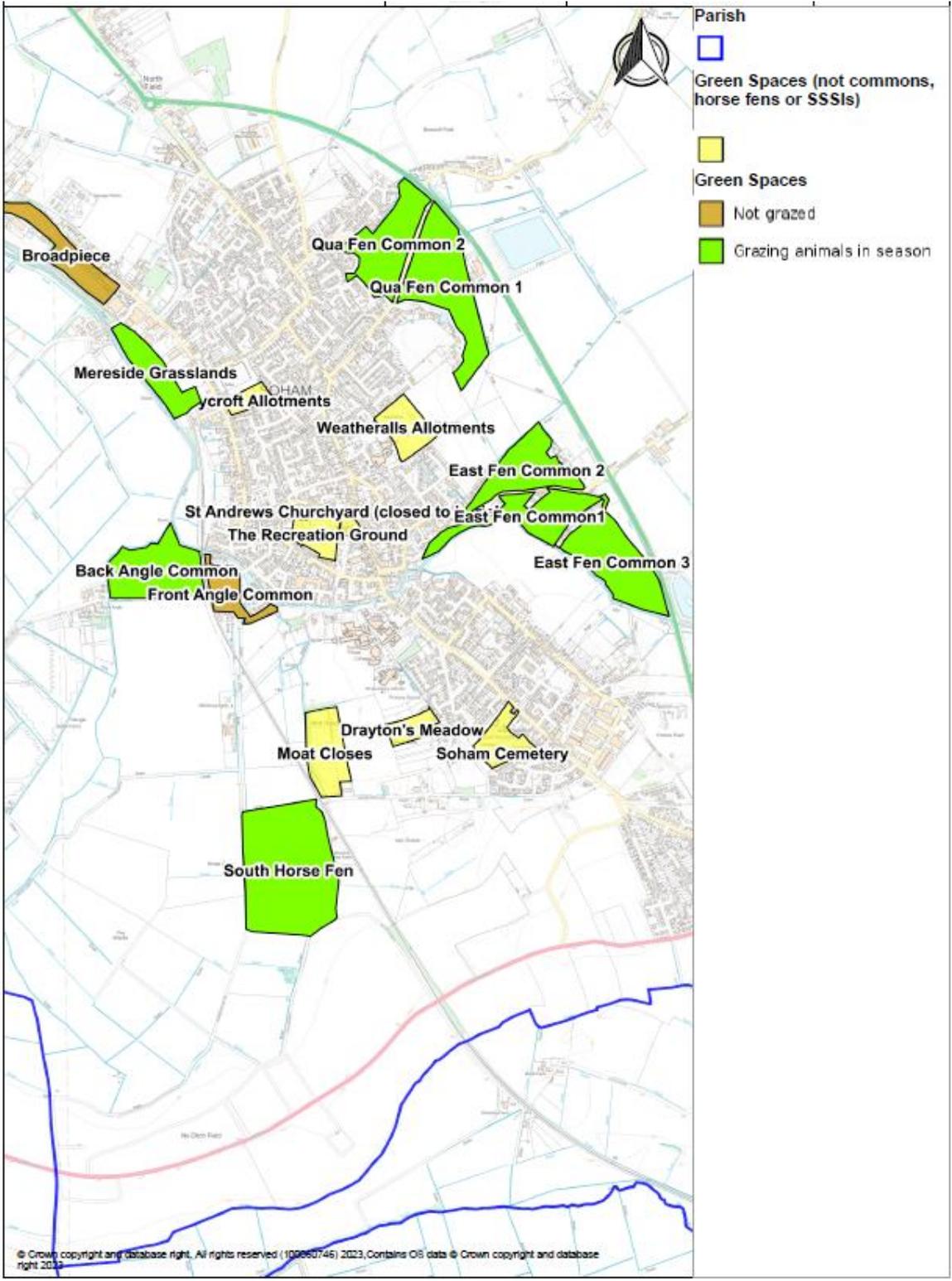
ASSESSMENT OF SITES AGAINST LOCAL GREEN SPACES CRITERIA – May 2023

Site Number	Site Address	Proposed for Inclusion	Local Green Space Criteria							Comments
			Proximity to community	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife	Not and Extensive Tract of land	
1	Berrycroft Allotments	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Weatherall Allotments	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	The allotments are detailed as part of the Eastern Gateway mixed use allocation. However, the most recent master planning does not include the allotments within the site area and proposal to relocate the allotments into another part of the Eastern Gateway has not been taken forward. As such, the Local Plan does not consider the most up to date and relevant position and the Town Council are confident that the allotments will endure beyond the plan period. The designation as allotments does not provide the policy protection warranted by this important green space.
3	The Cemetery	Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Site partially within County Wildlife Site but broader LGS designation appropriate.
3	St Andrews Church closed churchyard	Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
5	Recreation Ground	Yes	✓			✓			✓	
6	Drayton Meadows	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	

Site Number	Site Address	Proposed for Inclusion	Local Green Space Criteria							Comments
			Proximity to community	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife	Not and Extensive Tract of land	
7	Moat Closes	Yes	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Qua Fen Common Parts 1 and 2	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Commons are included given need to safeguard these unique areas which have been under threat notwithstanding their formal designation as Commons.
9	East Fen Common Parts 1, 2 and 3	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Angle Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	South Horse Fen Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	North Horse Fen Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
14	Mereside	Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
15	Broadpiece	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	Soham Village College Playing Fields	No	✓						✓	

Map to show Local Green Space considered in the north of Soham





Map to show Local Green Space considered in the south of Soham

Site 1	Berrycroft Allotments
	
Description of site	Very popular allotment site well used and within easy reach of many homes in the northern part of Soham.
Approx area Ha	1.3ha
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	The allotments are within the built up area of the northern part of Soham to the east of Mereside, north of West Drive Gardens and west of Nightall Road. The allotments are within easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and is not isolated or distant from communities.
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>Allotments have been an important part of the life of Soham for many years because they allow people who do not have extensive gardens to grow their own food. Allotments have also been shown to be of great benefit to wildlife.</p> <p>The site is of significant recreational value as an allotment, is a place of relative tranquillity within a town setting and offers opportunities for wildlife and biodiversity to flourish in an otherwise urban environment.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	The allotments are distinct and separate being fenced all round for security with lockable gates at intervals. The site totals approximately 1.3 hectares and therefore does not represent an extension tract of land.
Recommendation	Despite being a statutory allotment site, there are examples (Weatheralls Allotments) where residential development allocations has been permitted and the existing allotments have been lost. It is critical that this important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.

Site 2	Weatheralls Allotments
	
Description of site	<p>Statutory Allotments site which are part of the mixed use allocation at the Eastern Gateway and therefore some allotments have been neglected. However, this is being rectified and more people are seeking allotments to grow their own food.</p> <p>Site is fenced all round for security.</p>
Approx area Ha	To be confirmed
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	<p>Immediately adjacent to the built up part of the Town and the Weatheralls Primary School. Five minutes walk from St Andrews Church in the centre of town.</p>
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>Allotments have been an important part of the life of Soham for many years because they allow people who do not have extensive gardens to grow their own food. Allotments have also been shown to be of great benefit to wildlife and to the mental health of local people.</p> <p>The Allotments form part of a mixed use allocation known as the Eastern Gateway which includes provision for housing, a new doctors surgery and the relocation of the allotments to the bypass boundary thereby allowing residential development to be located adjacent to the school.</p> <p>However, the masterplanning for the site, since the adoption of the Local Plan has recognised the inherent legal and practical difficulties of moving and relocating existing allotments to an alternative location. The most recent plans for the site retain the allotments in situ.</p> <p>As such, it is anticipated that the Local Plan allocation, as far as it relates to the allotments is no longer available for development. As an important recreation and wildlife space at the heart of the Town it is proposed to identify the site as a Local Green Space.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	<p>The allotments are clearly distinct and a defined area not in the open countryside.</p>
Recommendation	<p>The Local Plan 2015 identifies the allotment as part of a mixed use allocation for the redevelopment known as The Eastern Gateway. The allocation identifies that the allotments will be relocated into</p>

	<p>another part of the site. Although the allotments predominantly remain within the ownership of the Town Council and are not part of the current Masterplan propositions for the Eastern Gateway, allotments should be recognised for their recreational, tranquillity and habitat value. As such it is recommended that the allotments should be included as a Local Green Space designation.</p>
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Site 3

The Cemetery



Description of site

The cemetery is still in use and houses graves dating from Victorian times when the Cemetery was started. The entrance from Fordham Road has electronic gates to enable vehicles to enter easily. The main road is shaded by two beautiful old copper beech trees which form a complete arch over the road. The roundabout circles a weeping ash tree. This immediately outside the pair of Victorian stone chapels which are listed buildings.

Part of the Cemetery is a County Wildlife site because of the interesting flora to be found there. In spring there are snowdrops, cowslips and later bluebells. There is a short avenue of lime trees and many other good trees and many smaller trees and shrubs surrounding the sections of the Cemetery.

The Memorial Garden has a Potentilla hedge in front. There is a plaque on the roundabout showing the locations of the War Graves located there. A very pleasant and tranquil place to visit.

Approx area Ha

2.42 hectares

The cemetery is centrally located within the built up area of the central part of Soham 0.5 mile from St Andrews Church. The Cemetery is within easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the

Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	local community it serves and is not isolated or distant from communities.
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>This is the only open cemetery in Soham and is still in regular use, despite more cremations happening nowadays. However, the cemetery has a garden of remembrance to accommodate the ashes if required.</p> <p>As a result the cemetery is of great importance to community both as a burial site for all religions and as an area for people to remember their loved ones. It is a pleasant and tranquil place to visit and remember.</p> <p>Various indicator species of neutral grassland were present at the last report in 2005. However, it was noted that the site was in poor condition and required a management plan where grass cutting is less frequent. A number of trees are present, in particular <i>Taxus bacata</i> and <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>. Much of the rest of the area is poor quality neutral grassland with <i>Primula veris</i>, <i>Lotus corniculatus</i>, <i>Pastinaca sativa</i>, <i>Achillea millefolium</i> amongst other species have been seen.</p> <p>According to the report map only the oldest part of the cemetery is included in the Wildlife site although now in poor condition.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	The Cemetery is a distinct, well-defined area of land within the built up part of the town extending to 2.42 hectares.
Recommendation	Notwithstanding part of the site is within a County Wildlife Site designation, it is important that the whole site is also recognised for its importance as a Local Green Space. Recommended that the site is included within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space.

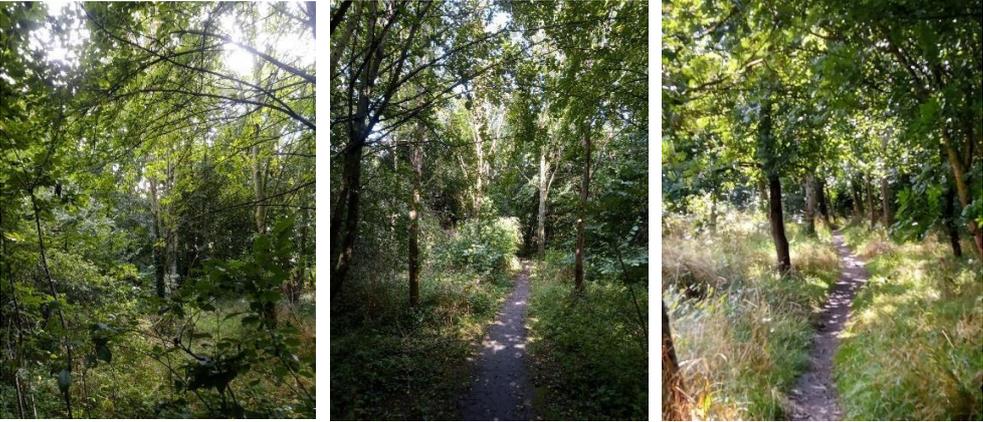
Site 4	St Andrews Church closed churchyard
	
Description of site	<p>This closed churchyard stands in the centre of the town. The footpath on the west side of the High Street has been diverted to pass directly through the churchyard. There is also a path from the back of the church which runs from the churchyard, along the side of the Recreation Ground exiting on Clay Street. This is used as a shortcut for Village College pupils.</p> <p>The churchyard is a pleasant area with benches, shaded by mainly lime trees. It is used as a popular meeting place in the centre of town. The main bus stop in town is just outside the wall. The area is full of old gravestones and it is an interesting way to spend a few minutes trying to read the inscriptions.</p>
Approx area Ha	0.4 hectares
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	The churchyard is centrally located within the built up area of the central part of Soham adjacent to St Andrews Church. The Church Yard is within easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and is not isolated or distant from communities.
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>The Church yard is a pleasant respite in an otherwise urbanised High Street and often used now by the Church for outside events and for walking groups to foregather at the start of their excursions. It therefore has an informal recreational role.</p> <p>The site is of historic significance providing the setting for St Andrews Church and has an inherent beauty, contrasting to the strong built up character of the High Street.</p> <p>No assessment has been made of the wildlife habitats although it is anticipated that it contributes to the biodiversity value of the area.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	The Churchyard is a distinct, well defined area of land within the built up part of the town extending to 0.4 hectares.
Recommendations	This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.
Site 5	Recreation Ground



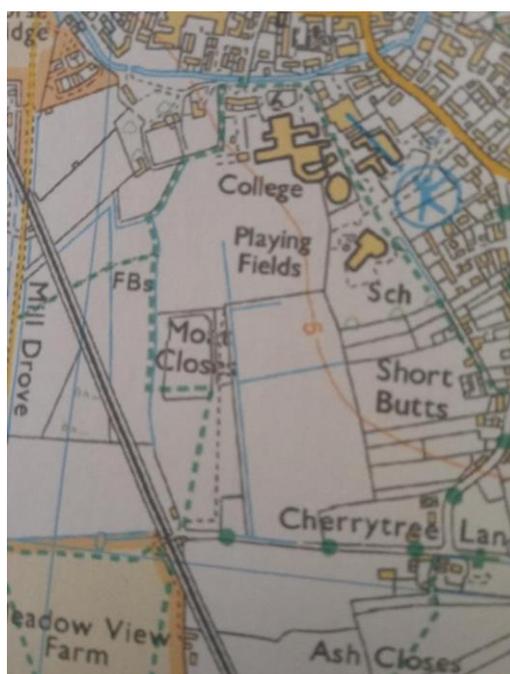
Description of site	The Recreation Ground is a substantial open green space with a number of mature trees and shrubs and bulbs in spring. It has a children's play area, skateboard park, surfaced area for ball sports and car park. Because it is used for a children's play area, no dogs are allowed on the Recreation Ground.
Approx area Ha	2.24 ha
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	The Recreation Ground is centrally located within the built up area of the central part of Soham adjacent to St Andrews Church. The Church Yard is within easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and is not isolated or distant from communities.
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	The Recreation Ground was originally the garden of a big house which after a fire was sold to the then Parish Council. The house was rescued and now acts as the Town Council office and community space. The garden has become the Recreation Ground and is used throughout the year by many members of the public e.g. Children, teenagers and adults. It is a popular place for a picnic in summer. The building on the Recreation Ground is used by scouts and guides and a preschool playgroup. All these groups use the green area for play and exercise. The Recreation ground is used every year for the Soham Carnival and the Pumpkin Show both of which are very popular local events. Other organisations can hire the area for such events as Beer festival etc.
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	The site is a well contained area within the built up part of Soham and is not an extensive tract of land as it is bounded on the east side by a footpath from the churchyard to Clay Street and on the other sides by fences and hedges mainly at the bottom of residents' gardens
Recommendation	This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation. The site area excludes the built and developed area where it is anticipated that further extensions to the Community Building or car parking may be required. This ensures that the Local Green Space will endure beyond the Plan period.

Site 6	Draytons Meadow
	 
Description of site	<p>This meadow used to be farmed but was abandoned about 25 years ago. Nothing has been done to it since then. As a result it has become an overgrown mainly grass field with many brambles, various plants and small trees as well as a colony of mare's tail (<i>Equisetum arvense</i>). This has made a wonderful wildlife haven for many insects, plants and birds.</p> <p>The site has a colony of bee orchids, a stand of wild lupins and a number of self-set trees. The area furthest from the access track has a stand of semi mature field maples and a couple of wet areas which increases the diversity. The town council has planted 7 native trees as part of the Queens Platinum Jubilee Green Canopy project.</p> <p>The site is within the ownership of Soham Town Council with the ambition of improving the site further so that it is recognised as a local nature reserve by maintaining and improving the flora and fauna.</p>
Approx area Ha	2.24 ha
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	<p>This site is situated just off the track which runs along the back of the Butts from St Andrews School and is well used by local people.</p> <p>Drayton's Meadow is within easy walking distance (up to 400m or a 5 minute walk) from the local community it serves and is not isolated or distant from communities.</p>

<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?</p>	<p>The site is recognised for its natural beauty, tranquility and abundance of wildlife. This site is new to the residents as it has only recently been opened up to the public. It is clear that it is a valuable wildlife site which we already know hosts badgers and deer as well as various interesting plants and insects.</p> <p>It is not an extensive tract of land as it is bordered by pony paddocks and a local track however, it may provide a useful link to other green spaces around the locality and enable wildlife to travel between spaces safely.</p>
<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>The site is a well contained area within the built up part of Soham and is not an extensive tract of land as it is bounded on the west side by a footpath from St Andrews School to The Butts</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.</p>

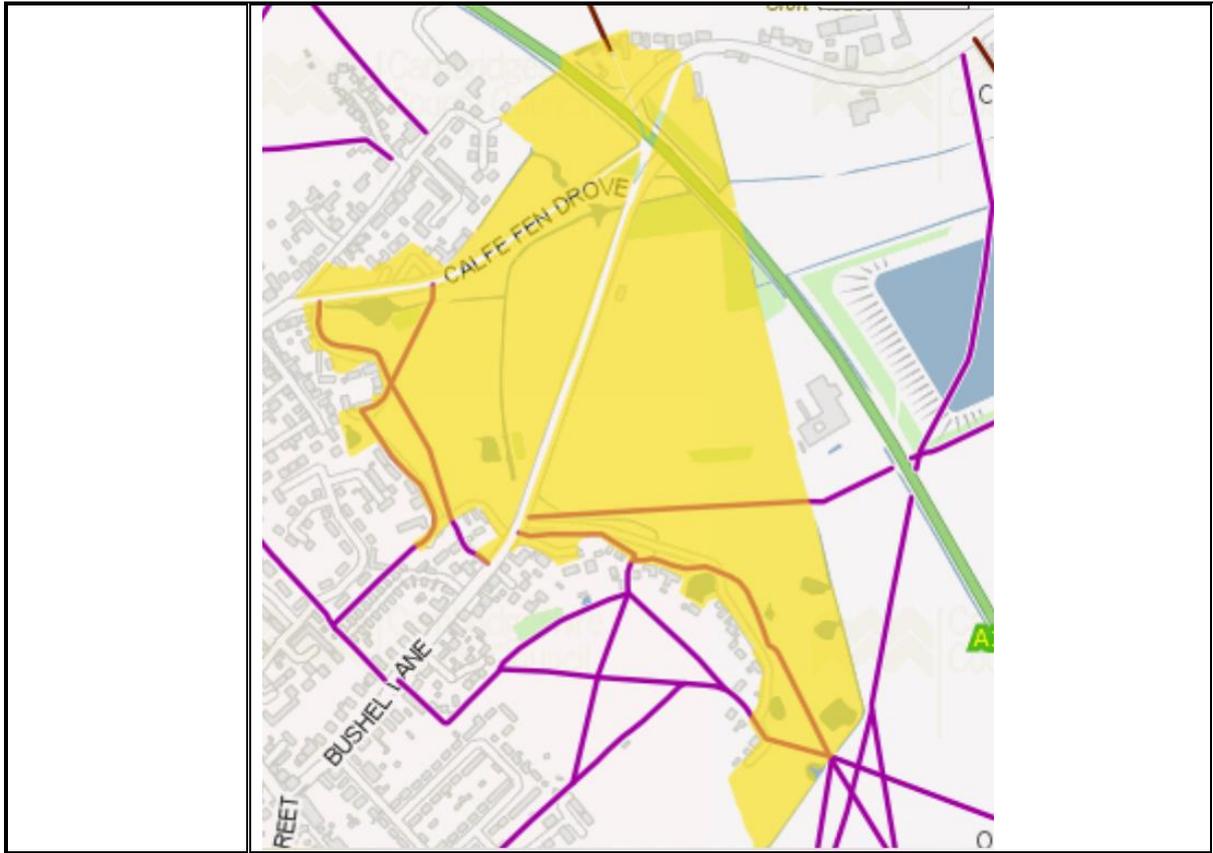
Site 7	Moat Closes
	
Description of site	<p>Mixed woodland and open grassland surrounded by fields and Soham Village College (SVC) playing field to the north east. There is a stream to three sides of the four with a network of pathways and a designated footpaths.</p> <p>The area borders the railway line and is only 18 metres from this entrance onto the South Wet Horse Fen. Mill Drove, Angle Common, Leonards Crossing, The Moat House, College Close, The Butts, Soham Village College, St Andrew's C of E Primary school, The Short Butts and Wicken are connected to the site via pathways or further field systems.</p> <p>The area is a habitat for a multitude of birds, deer, butterflies, bees, field mice, grasshoppers and there is some evidence of rabbits and snakes. It is dense with vegetation under the tree line which is comprised of various deciduous types and some fruit bearing. The trees lay to the west, north and south of the land parcel, from top to bottom of the entire site and make up most of the land parcel. The open areas are grassland and form the central and eastern sections of the land parcel.</p> <p>Surrounding dwellings are minimal with only three dwellings to the front of the site (from The Butts). The main dwelling points are from The Moat House, College Close and College grounds then on into the town. But the only way in this way is via a footpath. Vehicle access is achievable from only one point along a 2-metre wide, single tract roadway with deep and wide ditches to either side of with tall hedge rows.</p>
Approx area Ha	1.6 hectares
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	The site is reasonably close to the central and southern part of Soham. From The Moat/SVC and St Andrews School, approx. 320m From The Oaks and The Butts approx. 320m

<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?</p>	<p>Although privately owned the site can be accessed via a public footpath and other permissive paths through the woods and the grassland. Footpath 100 and 101 cross the site and provides links to Wicken and national cycle routes. It links other sites of interest, i.e.: Soham South Horse Fen, a short walk along Mill Drove or Leonards Crossing to the Soham/Wicken Cycle way, Angle Common and into Soham via College Close/Clay Steet.</p> <p>This area provides an important link between green spaces because it is close to or linked by green lanes to South Horse Fen, Drayton Meadow, Village College sports fields.</p> <p>Its historic interest is via its connected history with The Moat House which although a substantial Victorian House now, was once the home of the Thorntons and other titled families and was, as its name suggest, a moated House in Medieval times. The Moat Closes are the remains of the land holdings associated with the house and Church.</p> <p>The site is beautiful, teeming with wildlife and is a place of true tranquillity with easy pedestrian access and connectivity. The students of SVC also use the main central open field pathway as part of their cross country course.</p>
<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>The site is approximately 1.6 hectares and is well defined by landscaping, accessible by designated footpaths. Its characteristics are one of woodland with open space as a portion of the site. It does not follow the same large land parcel traits as our Manorial commons or wet lands, so is therefore unique in that aspect of, again being predominately woodland. But it fits extremely well within the landscape. Current tree planting is also being undertaken in the neighbouring field to the west.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.</p>

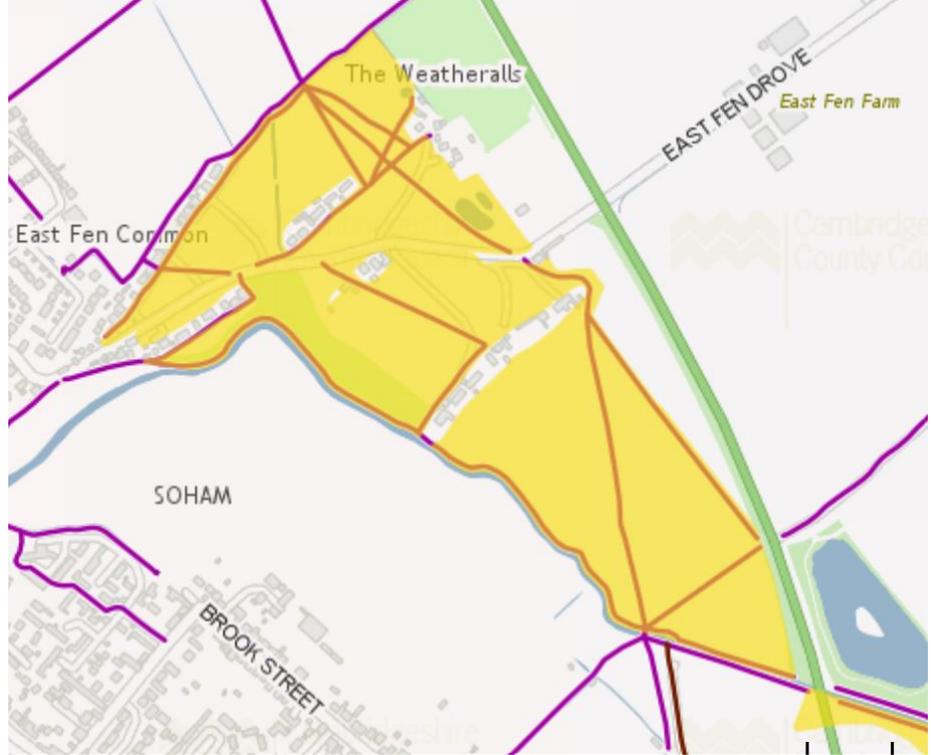


Site 8	Qua Fen Common parts 1 and 2
	
<p>Description of site</p>	<p>There are two main parts to the common divided by the road and the adjacent animal pound which is fenced.</p> <p>Because the areas are grazed by loose horses, the vegetation has a mosaic effect because where people walk they keep the vegetation short which the horses prefer for their grazing.</p> <p>The common is cut once or twice a year during the growing season to keep the thistles and ragwort in check. Part of the common is fenced to accommodate Soham United Football club which has extensive support locally and provides for senior and junior teams.</p> <p>There is an interesting flora on the common with some rarer species like orchid and restharrow. Most of the exterior boundaries of the common are householders' boundaries i.e. fences, walls, gates, hedges but some are mainly wild hedges with barbed wire to contain the grazing animals. There are some ditches and ponds which mainly dry up in summer.</p> <p>There are several vehicular tracks over the common too., which provide access to the surrounding houses. There are a number of public footpaths across the common which are served with timber bridges over the ditches and metal kissing gates for entrance onto the common. There is a wealth of wildlife to be seen including deer, hedgehogs, white egrets, and many other birds who make use of the common for foraging for food.</p>
<p>Approx area Ha</p>	<p>20.2hectares</p>
<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</p>	<p>Adjacent to the main built up part of Soham</p>
<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic</p>	<p>This is one of the town's historic commons and is one of the best known and most used and this has been demonstrated clearly in a recent local survey. They are historically important representing a key asset to Soham, and are a key feature of its landscape setting as set out in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022.</p> <p>People enjoy walking on the common for exercise, for health and wellbeing and to entertain the children and dogs. It is easily accessed from various places and within easy reach of the town centre. Several footpaths connect to other commons.</p>

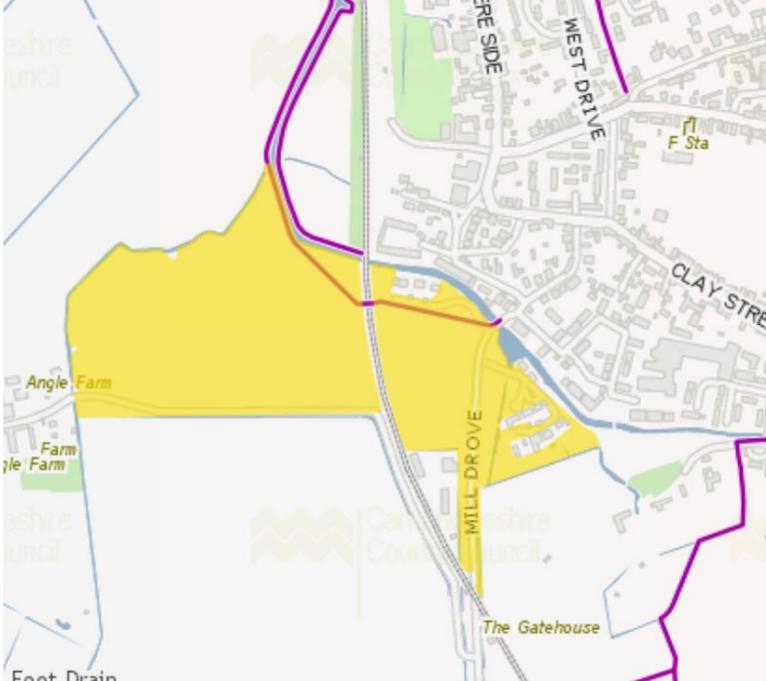
<p>significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife?</p>	<p>Much of the site has deteriorated in species number in particular the aquatic plants and those favouring the wetter areas partly due to drier summers. However, Great crested newts, bee orchid, pyramidal orchid are all recorded here.</p> <p>Some rare and interesting plants found here include Common Knapweed - Crested Dog's-tail grassland community, and also supports frequent numbers of at least three strong neutral grassland indicators. It has substantial areas of unimproved grassland and is enhanced by its floristically rich ponds and ditches and the mature boundary hedgerows.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>
<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>Qua Fen Common is among the local historical commons which are unique to Soham. It is contained, well defined area adjacent to the Town and does not extend into the open countryside.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Study Enhancement Study 2017 estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%. Urban development is proposed to abut the commons and there will be a marked increase in local housing density. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for the long-term management of the commons. Given its value as a space for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, historic importance and tranquillity a Local Green Space is appropriate.</p>



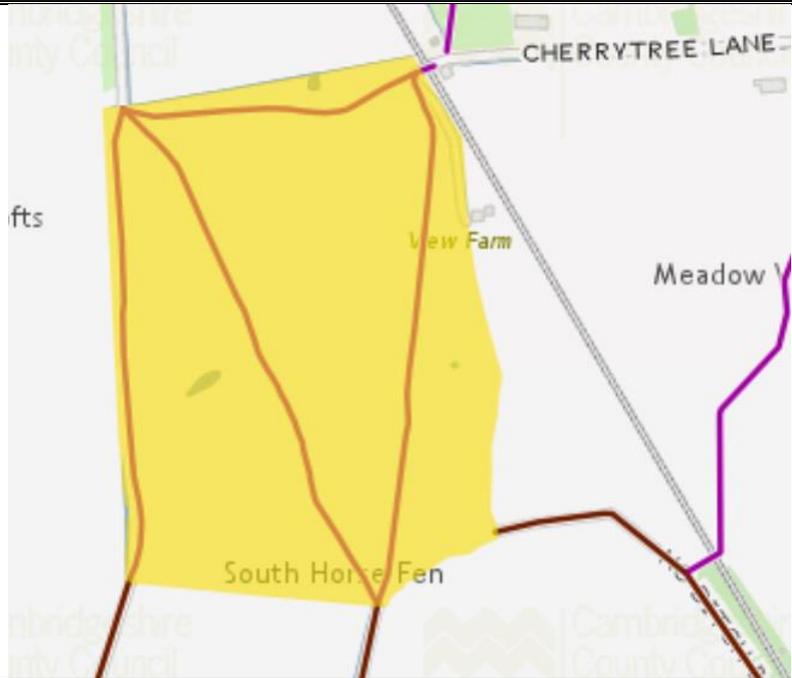
Site 9	East Fen Common – Parts 1, 2 and 3
	
<p>Description of site</p>	<p>East Fen Common is divided into two distinct parts by Paddock Street – the area closest to the river (Back East Fen) and the rest of the common which abuts the allocation in the Local Plan ‘Eastern Gateway’.</p> <p>The large area is rough ground used for grazing in summer and is crisscrossed by footpaths, tracks and roads.</p>
<p>Approx area Ha</p>	<p>21 hectares</p>
<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</p>	<p>Immediately adjacent to the built up part of Soham with public footpath and road access across the sites.</p>
<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?</p>	<p>Much used by the local community and valued for its wildlife and historical significance. It is a lovely peaceful place to walk and admire the wildlife. The Commons Enhancement Study highlighted that most people spent 30 mins to 2 hours on the common.</p> <p>Many footpaths cross the different areas of common and alongside the Lode providing public access for recreation. The area is of historic significance because it is common land and has been for centuries. Its history includes the allowance of commoners to graze cattle, horses and geese on the common.</p> <p>The common is used by many birds for foraging and nesting. Designation is mainly semi-improved poor grassland with many ditches and an area near to the Lode is unimproved grassland. Important species have been recorded there including:</p> <p>Barn owl, Adder’s Tongue, Green-winged Orchid, Meadow Saxifrage, Common Frog, House Sparrow, Swift, Yellow Hammer, Cetti's Warbler, Common sedge, Hoary Plantain, Lesser Spearwort, Marsh Dock, Marsh Ragwort, Meadow Saxifrage, Quaking grass, Small yellow-fruited sedge, Tubular Dropwort, Eurasian Otter, Eurasian Water Vole are all recorded on the site.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>

<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>The southern boundary on the Common is defined by the Lode. Much of the other boundaries are either domestic hedges/fences etc or natural hedges and trees.</p> <p>It is local in character providing open space for both existing and planned residents.</p>
	 <p>The map shows the East Fen Common area highlighted in yellow. It is bounded by a purple line (the Lode) to the south and east, and a blue line (the Lode) to the north. Surrounding areas include 'The Weatheralls' to the north, 'East Fen Farm' to the northeast, and 'SOHAM' to the southwest. Streets shown include 'EAST FEN DROVE' and 'BROOK STREET'. The map also shows 'Cambridge County Council' branding.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Study Enhancement Study 2017 estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%. Urban development is proposed to abut the commons and there will be a marked increase in local housing density. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for the long-term management of the commons. Given its value as a space for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, historic importance and tranquillity a Local Green Space is appropriate.</p>

Site 10	Angle Common
	
<p>Description of site</p>	<p>Ancient Common with Allotment house plots, some from at least 1656. Split into North West and South East in 19th Century by embankment with railway line to Ely.</p> <p>The common is waterlogged during wet seasons, especially in north west section, which is grazed by cattle during permitted months. Elevated Lode bank runs north of this. Cattle creep connects the two sections.</p> <p>The northern part of South East section is fringed by reed mace adjacent to track in north of common, with adjacent row of early 20th century cottages - some with more modern extensions - along river bank.</p> <p>In eastern section, ancient allotments now occupied by 1800s extended cottages and more recent encroachments. Several drainage ditches run across the site, towards the river.</p> <p>It also connects to the Lodeside walks which run from the Common past the station following the Lode north to the junction with the River Ouse.</p>
<p>Approx area Ha</p>	<p>14 Hectares</p>
<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</p>	<p>The Common is immediately adjacent to the built up part of the Town.</p>
<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic</p>	<p>As part of the patchwork of Soham's Ancient Commons, it is well used by walkers (with and without dogs), and by cyclists using the lane through it to access South Horse Fen Common and the Mediaeval drove road and track to Wicken. The drove road has been improved to provide a cycle route as an alternative means of travel to villages south of Soham, and even for commuting to Cambridge.</p> <p>Angle Common provides a buffer between the town and the agricultural land now on the former Soham Mere.</p>

<p>significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife?</p>	<p>It provides a valuable refuge for plants and animals from the town or adjacent agricultural land. Back common is heavily grazed neutral grassland. Front common has more interesting flora in some areas including orchids. Strawberry clover <i>Trifolium fragiferum</i>.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>
<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>With its other areas of common, the Common is local in character and within easy walking distance of the High Street.</p>
	
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Study Enhancement Study 2017 estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%. Urban development is proposed to abut the commons and there will be a marked increase in local housing density. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for the long-term management of the commons. Given its value as a space for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, historic importance and tranquillity a Local Green Space is appropriate.</p>

Site 11	South Horse Fen
	
Description of the site	<p>An area of mainly grassland surrounded by hedges and trees and with some areas of wetter areas or ponds, most of which dry up in summer. Grazed over the summer by cattle and/or horses.</p> <p>The Common lies to the south west of Soham.</p>
Approx area Ha	33.8 hectares
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	<p>The site is 750m from Cherry Tree Lane and properties at Morello Chase, the edge of the settlement.</p>
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>An area of mainly grassland surrounded by hedges and trees and with some areas of wetter areas or ponds, most of which dry up in summer. Grazed over the summer by cattle and/or horses.</p> <p>It also links other sites of interest, i.e.: Moat Closes (an entrance along The Butts is only 18 meters away) with a short walk or journey along Mill Drove or Leonards Crossing to the Soham/Wicken Cycle way, Angle Common and into Soham via Mill Corner, Clay Street or Mereside.</p> <p>Its historic interest is via its connected history and association with other protected and manorial lands and commons. It is a major part of Soham's wet land and views.</p> <p>The site is open, and popular with walkers and dog walkers albeit across the northern side and routes. It is teeming with wildlife and insects.</p> <p>It also links into the Moat Closes and through that onto the Village College playing fields.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>

<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>South Horse Fen is among the local historical commons which are unique to Soham. It is contained, well defined area and accessible to the Soham Community as part of a wider network of green spaces, green lanes and public footpaths.</p>
	 <p>The map shows a yellow highlighted area labeled 'South Horse Fen'. To the north is 'CHERRYTREE LANE'. To the east is a 'Meadow'. A 'View Farm' is also visible. A purple line indicates a path or boundary. The map is overlaid on a light grey background with some faint text like 'City Council' and 'Cambridge'.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Study Enhancement Study 2017 estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%. Urban development is proposed to abut the commons and there will be a marked increase in local housing density. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for the long-term management of the commons. Given its value as a space for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, historic importance and tranquillity a Local Green Space is appropriate.</p>

Site 12	North Horse Fen
	
<p>Description of site</p>	<p>The Fen is a large area of open grassland which is grazed during the summer with cattle and horses. The vegetation is a mosaic of long and short plants with a good mixture of grasses and flowering plants. The fen is topped every year to control the thistles and volunteer shrubs. No spraying has been done for a number of years.</p> <p>There is a depression which runs across the field from SW to NE which is wet in winter. This collects in a pond in the centre which dries up in the summer.</p> <p>The fen is surrounded by mature hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, wild rose and bramble. There are a number of mature willow and ash trees in the margins. There are two rights of way across the fen and a bridleway runs alongside it on the north side. The SW corner is bordered by a business park which is well fenced. Designation – semi-improved poor grassland with a pond.</p>
<p>Approx area Ha</p>	<p>11.91 Ha</p>
<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</p>	<p>The Common is 1.5 miles from town centre. However, the Common is adjacent to a small hamlet of dwellings and businesses at Barcham Corner, to the north of Soham.</p> <p>The site can be accessed via bridleway from Great Fen Road.</p>
<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity</p>	<p>This part of the Lord of the Manor's estate and is one of the areas where local people were entitled to graze their animals. So this is important to the town of Soham historically as it has been like this since the 1500s. Along with the Commons, the Horse Fens are not known to exist, in quite the same way as they do in Soham, anywhere else in the country.</p> <p>It is still grazed by local people's animals and remains much as it has been for centuries. So its boundaries have to be kept intact and mostly they are hedges, trees or where necessary fences.</p> <p>It is a very tranquil area where there is very little sound. It is a peaceful place for all types of wildlife and a good place for a walk. People who work on the nearby light industrial estate use it particularly at lunchtimes. However, when the animals are grazing dogs must be kept on leads.</p>

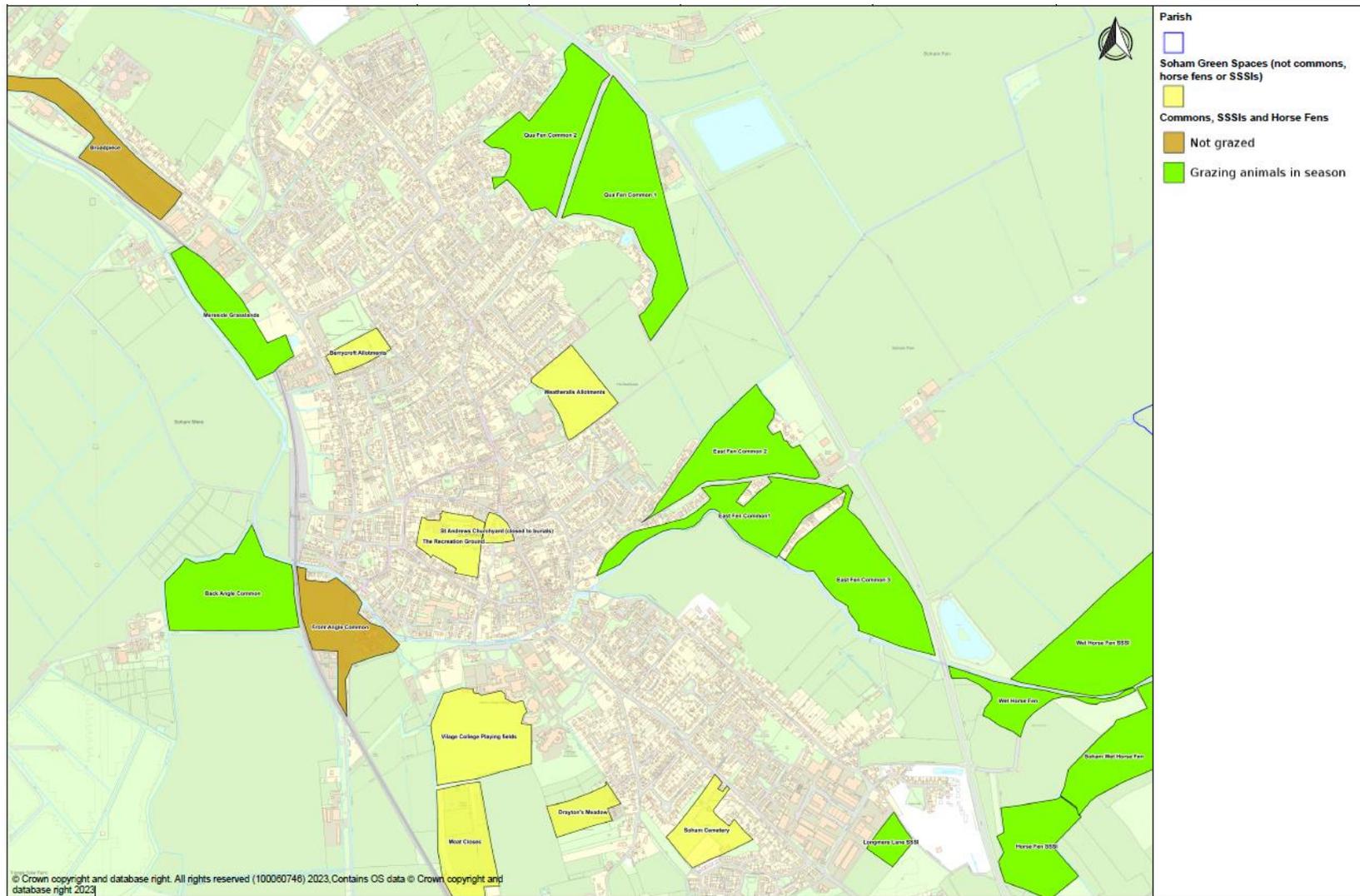
<p>or richness of its wildlife?</p>	<p>Because of the areas of long grass, it can be very wet after rain and during the winter. There are two footpaths running across it and the northern boundary is formed by a byway.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>
<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>It is officially a fen and therefore very local in character. The site is well defined and not an extensive tract of land but an important part of Soham's history.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Study Enhancement Study 2017 estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%. Urban development is proposed and there will be a marked increase in local housing density. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for the long-term management of the commons. Given its value as a space for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, historic importance and tranquillity a Local Green Space is appropriate.</p>

Site 13	Mereside Grasslands
	
<p>Description of site</p>	<p>This is privately owned, and is not open to the public.</p> <p>It consists of three different areas. The one nearest Mereside is where the house is and a newly made large pond. The next piece across the railway tracks is a field with scrubby trees. The last parcel consists of two small paddocks used for sheep/horses nearest to the Lode itself. The Wildlife Trust is happy with the management of the areas for wildlife, particularly great crested newts.</p>
<p>Approx area Ha</p>	<p>4.6ha</p>
<p>Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?</p>	<p>Yes – the site abuts commercial and industrial units which front Mereside and are part of the main part of the Town. Significant residential areas are within easy walking distance (within 400m) of Mereside.</p>
<p>Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?</p>	<p>The area is particularly significant because of its wildlife value and management. Notably the presence of and ambition to promote the growth in the population of Great Crested Newts.</p> <p>Although scrubby, the land is managed to promote wildlife habitats and has an intrinsic beauty.</p>

<p>Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?</p>	<p>The land is well defined areas and with a site area of 4.6 is not extensive.</p> <p>The Common is also valued for its beauty, given the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the town, the visual attractiveness of the site as a whole and the views it offers to the settlement and its landmarks.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.</p>

Site 14	Broadpiece
	
Description of site	<p>This piece of land runs alongside Broadpiece road with places which are clearly used as vehicular access. Most of the area is open grassland with many Ash, Willow and Beech Trees. Some of the trees have been allowed to grow up particularly alongside the ditch which runs along the western side of the area. At the southern end there is evidence that trees were planted about 20 years ago and some work has been done to keep the scrub down. Part of this site closest to the road is a registered common. The rest is a county wildlife site.</p>
Approx area Ha	5.3ha
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	<p>The site is adjacent to commercial building on the south eastern boundary with residential development on the opposite side of Broadpiece. Further residential development of 147 homes is proposed beyond the linear form of housing to the north east of Broadpiece.</p>
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>It is used mainly recreationally by walkers and dogs but it is also used by wildlife give evidence of tracks running into the thickest parts of the shrubbery.</p> <p>Its historic interest is via its connected history and association with other protected and manorial lands and commons.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	<p>The site is well defined area of land and is not extensive in character.</p>
Recommendation	<p>This important green space is included site within the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space designation.</p>

Site 15	Soham Village College Playing Fields.
	
Description of site	<p>Large area of grassland, school playing field formerly part of extensive parkland estate of Soham family. Boundary drainage ditches of mediaeval origin to west of site.</p> <p>Fringed by mature trees and hedges, with public footpath to ancient nearby meadows, and trackway to Burwell.</p>
Approx area Ha	7.5 Hectares.
Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?	Yes – the site is adjacent the main built up part of the Town.
Is it demonstrably special to a local community and does it 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?	<p>The school has a recreational value as a school playing fields but it is understood that these fields are not publicly accessible due to safeguarding reasons.</p> <p>Adjacent to both the housing area of town and to agricultural land with ancient paddocks and modern, growing crops.</p> <p>The contrast between the busy, modern school and the perimeter walk is striking. The drainage ditches here effectively keep the playing fields dry.</p> <p>The drained Mere bed is just a field or two to the west.</p> <p>The schoolchildren value their fields for the tranquil setting.</p> <p>The mature trees are home to a rich variety of wildlife, including buzzards.</p>
Is it local in character and not an extensive tract of land?	<p>The site is distinct and clearly identified from the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>It has the benefit of ancient drainage ditches to maintain the use of the playing fields.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Although the site is an important green space for the Village College it is not accessible so it does not satisfy the Local Green Space Criteria.</p> <p>Additionally, the Town Council has longer term ambition to provide sixth form accommodation and therefore the Local Green Space may not endure for the longer term.</p>



Map of Proposed Local Green Spaces –Submission Draft Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan.