

Local Green Spaces Study 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 The town of Blandford Forum is set in the heart of Dorset and has an estimated population of 10,325, is 409 hectares in area and has approximately 4,806 dwellings (2011 census). A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are proposed to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 The village of Blandford St Mary is set in the heart of Dorset, adjacent to Blandford Forum. The population at the 2011 census was 1511 but this figure is forecast to increase by approximately 200 by the end of 2019 as a result of housing development at Dorchester Hill. A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are proposed to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3 The village of Bryanston is set in the heart of Dorset and has an estimated population of 890 (DCC 2013 estimate). A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are proposed to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Policy Background National Planning Policy

2.1 In July 2018 the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which continued to include Local Green Space designation. NPPF §99 allows local communities, through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan process, to identify areas of Local Green Space which are important to them and which should be provided special protection.

2.2 NPPF §100 makes it clear that the designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community which 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.

2.3 NPPF §101 states that Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

Local Planning Policy (taken from North Dorset District Council's Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Local Green Spaces)

2.5 Local planning policy includes the saved policies of the North Dorset Local Plan 2003 and the adopted North Dorset Local Plan 2011- 2031 Part 1. The Local Planning Authority is currently undertaking a Local Plan Review.

2.6 National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection. Potential sites to be designated as Local Green Spaces will be identified through the Local Plan Review or through the neighbourhood planning process. Prior to that, the Important Open or Wooded Areas identified in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 will continue to be used for development management purposes.

2.7 The emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy 15: Green Infrastructure states that “Neighbourhood Development Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits and the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.”

2.8 Neighbourhood plans, when produced, should therefore seek the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in line with this policy. They should also seek to deliver the key green infrastructure benefits including on Local Green Spaces and Important Open or Wooded Areas, and contribute to the objectives of the future Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Important Open/Wooded Areas within Settlements

2.9 Policy 1.9 Important Open or Wooded Areas (IOWA) is a saved policy of the North Dorset Local Plan 2003. The IOWAs were designated to protect the amenity and character of settlements from the pressure of infill development. All settlements were surveyed and where it was considered that an open or wooded area contributed significantly to the amenity and character of a settlement, it was designated as an Important Open or Wooded Area on the Proposals Map. Both public and privately-owned areas of land were included. The most important criterion used for selection was “the overall contribution that the IOWA gives in visual or amenity terms to public areas within the town or village”, as set out in paragraph 1.54 of the 2003 Local Plan. School Playing Fields and Recreation Grounds were included within Settlement Boundaries and designated as IOWAs in view of their amenity value in both visual and recreational terms. Given the existing IOWA designation accords with the general principles of the Local Green Space designation in seeking to protect important open areas within settlements because of their amenity and character value it is advised that these designations should be taken into account when the designation of Local Green Spaces is being considered. However, it should be noted that the Local Green Space designation may not be appropriate for all IOWAs.

2.10 At the same time as green areas are designated as Local Green Spaces it is advised that IOWA designations should be reviewed / deleted so as to avoid any overlapping designations. The IOWA designations will continue to be saved until they are deleted either: through the North Dorset Local Plan – Part 2: Site Allocations or a neighbourhood plan. If communities do not want to risk losing the protection from development that existing IOWA designations provide, it is recommended that they give consideration to designating these areas, where appropriate, as Local Green Spaces.

2.11 Within the settlement boundaries of the towns and any villages with new boundaries established through Neighbourhood Plans, the Council’s policy is supportive of sensitive infill development. The Local Green Space designation can therefore be used to protect green spaces within towns and villages where the community consider infill development to be inappropriate.

3. Criteria for assessing Local Green Space

3.1 Conservation Areas and Green Space (as identified in the Local Green Spaces Working Group Report 2015) have been excluded as potential areas of Local Green Space, as these areas are already protected under different specific designations. Private gardens would also normally be excluded, except where a particular case can be made for their inclusion (such as where an area of Local Green Space would have a more coherent shape due to the inclusion of a small area of garden). Sites falling within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB may be included as Local Green Space, where it is deemed that AONB designation may not give sufficient protection to locally valued characteristics.

3.2 Wherever feasible, physical boundaries have been used to define Local Green Space. However, where no suitable boundary exists, other features have been used to demarcate the area, such as the line created by a neighbouring boundary.

3.3 Based on the principles established in the NPPF and Local Planning Policy, four tests have been devised for identifying Local Green Space across the area.

Test 1. Does the site already have planning permission, or has it been allocated for development in the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP)?

- The first stage in the assessment will be to review the planning history of each site to ensure that it is not subject to an extant planning permission and that it has not been allocated for development under the NDLP.
- The Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development, or where it has been allocated for development under the NDLP.
- An exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space designation would be compatible with the planning permission / NDLP allocation, or where the planning permission / NDLP allocation is no longer capable of being implemented.

Test 2. Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?

- The NPPF states that to be designated as a Local Green Space an area should be in reasonably close proximity to the community which it serves.
- PPG requires that if public access is a key factor, then the Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.

Test 3. Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?

- The NPPF makes clear that the area to be designated should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- PPG states that blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.
- Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for an area of Local Green Space, Blandford + considers that any site of more than 10 hectares might reasonably be interpreted as 'extensive' or 'blanket'.

Test 4. Is the site demonstrably special to the local community?

The designation of Local Green Space must be based on evidence which demonstrates why the area is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. To pass this test, an area must be demonstrably special and locally significant in one of the following categories:

- **Beauty** – This relates to the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site, and its contribution to the streetscape, landscape, character or setting of a settlement. To qualify, the site should contribute significantly to local character, for example by defining a sense of place, or by helping to define the physical form of a settlement.
- **Historic significance** – This relates to the historic importance a site holds for the local community. This could be because it contributes to the setting of a heritage asset or some other locally valued landmark. It might be because the site holds cultural associations which are of particular significance to the local community. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. AONB), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- **Recreational value** – Sites would need to hold local significance for recreation and be important to the community for a particular recreation activity or range of activities. These could be formal or informal activities.
- **Tranquillity** – In order to qualify, the site would need to be viewed by local people as important for the tranquillity it provided, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.
- **Richness of wildlife** – A site would need to be locally significant for wildlife in a way that could be demonstrated. It might, for example, home to species or habitats of principal importance, veteran trees, or locally characteristic plants and animals such as mistletoe. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. SSSI), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- **Other reason** – Sites might be special and locally significant for reasons other than those identified above. For example, a site might make a particular contribution to defining the individual character of a settlement, or it might be an asset of community value.

4. Consultation

4.1 This assessment will be published on the B+ website as part of the Neighbourhood Plan evidence base, where it can be viewed and commented on by all those taking part in the consultation on the Submission Plan.

4.2 The views of external organisations and the community had already been sought during the Pre-Submission Plan Consultation in November – December 2018. This document includes comments received while balancing the group and community's wishes.

4.3 The Pre-Submission Plan consultation included an invitation to all known landowners to make representations about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space.

5. Areas identified as potential Local Green Space

5.1 The table below provides information about each of the sites proposed as Local Green Space in the Submission Plan of the Neighbourhood Plan. They have been assessed against each of the four tests set out above.

BLANDFORD + NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE (Revised June 2018)

Test 1. Does the site already have planning permission, or has it been allocated for development in the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP)?

Test 2. Is the site reasonably close to the community it serves?

Test 3. Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land?

Test 4. Is the site demonstrably special to the local community for beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife or another reason?

Photo No.	Settlement	Location	Designations	Current Use	TEST 1:	TEST 2:	TEST 3:	TEST 4:
1	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Diamond Way	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational Open Space and Play Area	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.24 Ha	Recreational value – The site forms a large green space that is used as an amenity area together with a play area situated in close proximity to the community it serves. This area has been well planned as part of the design of the original development and has served local residents well.
2	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Westbury Way	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational Open Spaces and two Play Areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves.	0.35 Ha	Recreational value – The sites consist of several pockets of green open space in close proximity to the community it serves that are used as amenity areas with two Play Areas. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well as anticipated.
3	Blandford Langton St Leonards	Davies Gardens	The Blandford Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	Small memorial garden to two local and well respected Doctors	No	In the town centre	0.01 Ha	Historic significance – The site is a small memorial garden for Dr David and Dr Joan Davies, longstanding serving members of the community and is of particular local significance due to this.

Photo No.	Settlement	Location	Designations	Current Use	TEST 1:	TEST 2:	TEST 3:	TEST 4:
4	Blandford Hilltop	Badbury Heights	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Recreational open space areas in and around a large housing development with planned play areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	1.63 Ha	Recreational value – The sites form several pockets of open space, as well as some larger green spaces, and buffer zones, situated very close to the community it serves and that are used as amenity areas with planned Play Areas being installed upon completion of land transfers to the Town Council. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well as anticipated.
5	Blandford Old Town	Land adjacent Leisure Centre	The Blandford Blandford St Mary Bryanston Conservation Area	Recreational open space used as sports pitches	No	Adjacent to Blandford Forum residential areas, The Blandford School and Blandford Hospital	2.45 Ha	Recreational value –The site forms a large green open space adjacent to the leisure centre. The space is used as sports pitches and needs to be protected due to the existing shortage of sports pitches in Blandford Forum.
6	Blandford Old Town and Blandford Central	The Trailway	Part of the Trailway is within the Carnborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.	Route of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway now used for informal recreation and Blandford Parkrun	No	Runs through residential areas of the town	3.44 Ha	Recreational value – A walking, cycling and horse riding route that runs along the route of the old railway line and takes you through some picturesque villages of the Blackmore vale. The old railway line closed to rail traffic in 1966 provides an ideal route for a Trailway as it links many of North Dorset's towns and villages. The trail runs along a flat, surfaced three metre wide track suitable for pushchairs, mobility vehicles, horses, bicycles and walkers.
7	Blandford Forum	Overton Walk	Damory Estate	A green area with trees in the estate centre	No	Within the development it serves	0.5 Ha	Recreational value. A walking and cycling route, and a playing and assembly site for the young.

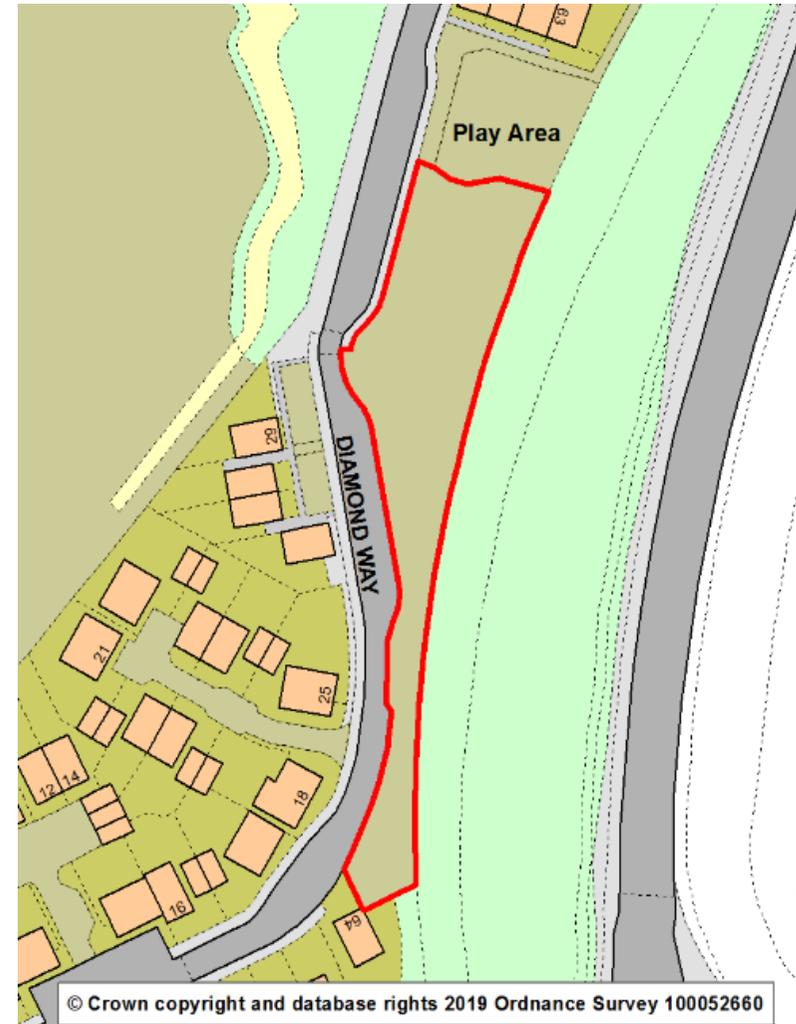
Photo No.	Settlement	Location	Designations	Current Use	TEST 1:	TEST 2:	TEST 3:	TEST 4:
8	Blandford St Mary	Coppice and Badger Sett	None	Small areas of grassland, scrub and trees with preservation orders that act as a haven for wildlife.	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.33 Ha	Richness of wildlife – The site forms a small area of land which gives its name to the surrounding ring of houses lies at the heart of the new Bryanston Hills housing estate built between 2001 and 2004. The ground includes wildlife activity. Because of the road layout between Dorchester Hill and Blandford St Mary primary school it is the only undeveloped green space within the village and provides a welcome area of green within the development.
9	Blandford St Mary	Bryanston Hills	None	Recreational open space areas	No	Sits in the middle of the development it serves	0.11 Ha	Recreation value – The sites form well-designed open green spaces as part of the originally designed development used as amenity areas.
10	Bryanston	Between The Cliff and Forum View	Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	A central island surrounded by roads providing an unspoilt entrance to the village and streetscape	No	Central to the village	0.5 Ha	Rich in wildlife. Open area of grassland, wild flowers and trees that is a tranquil and central streetscape for a rural village. It also acts as an area for wildlife
11	Bryanston	The Cliff	Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area	Central green area with telephone box and notice board. Is a historic landmark	No	Central to the village	0.11 Ha	Supports the character of the village providing a location for a telephone box book exchange and noticeboard and a view across open fields. A traditional meeting place

Local Green Spaces Photographs 2018 - Blandford

1. Diamond Way Amenity Area



The site forms a large green space that is used as an amenity area together with a play area situated in close proximity to the community it serves. This area has been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well. The area is owned and maintained by a Management Company paid for by residents of the development. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.

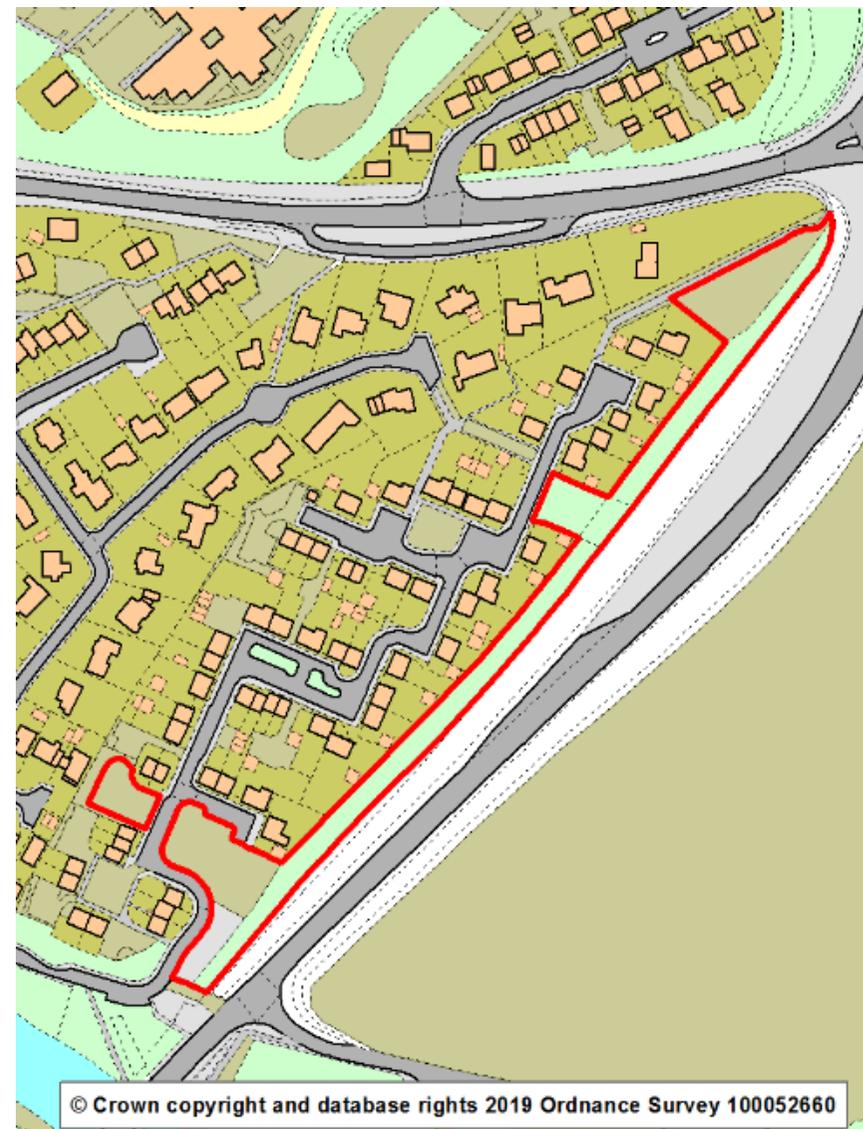


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.24 Ha)

2. Westbury Way



The sites consist of several pockets of green open space in close proximity to the community it serves that are used as amenity areas with two Play Areas. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well as anticipated. The sites are to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.

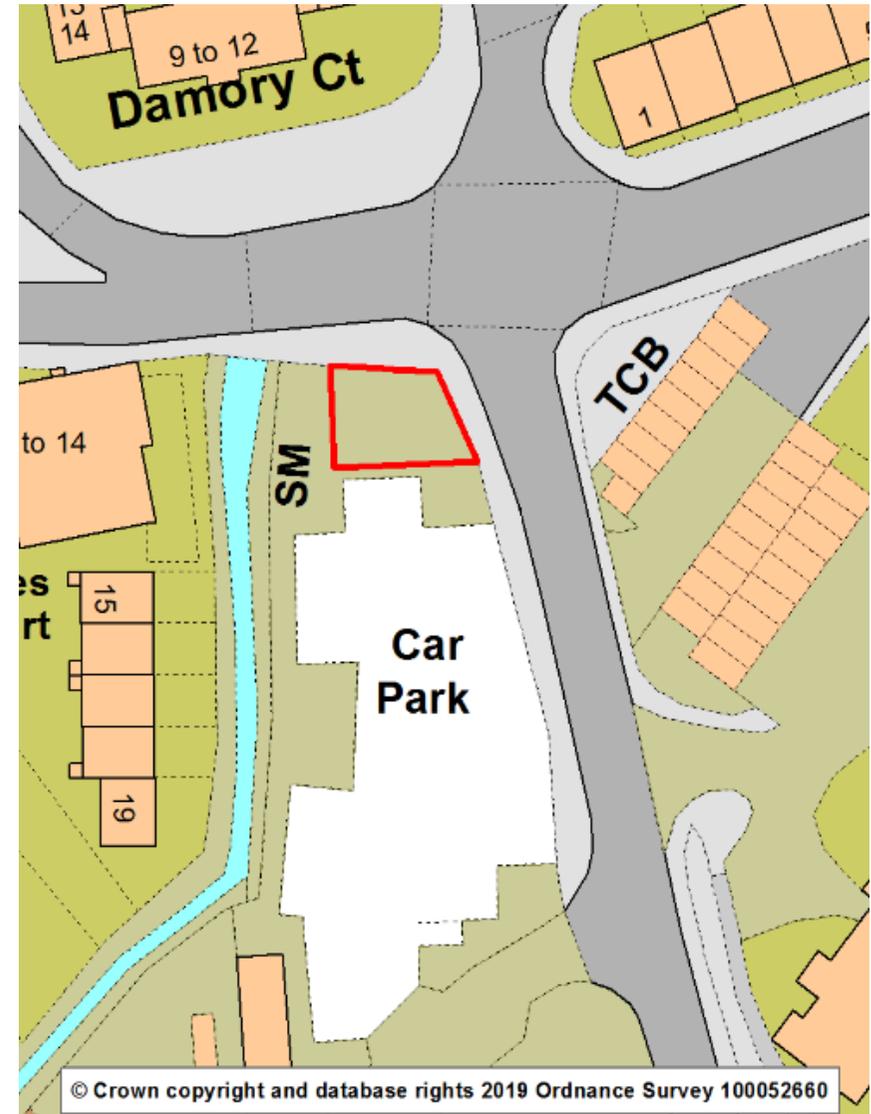


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.35 Ha)

3. Davies Gardens



The site is a small memorial garden for Dr David and Dr Joan Davies, longstanding serving members of the community and is particular local significance due to this. Owned by NDDC and maintained by the Town Council. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.

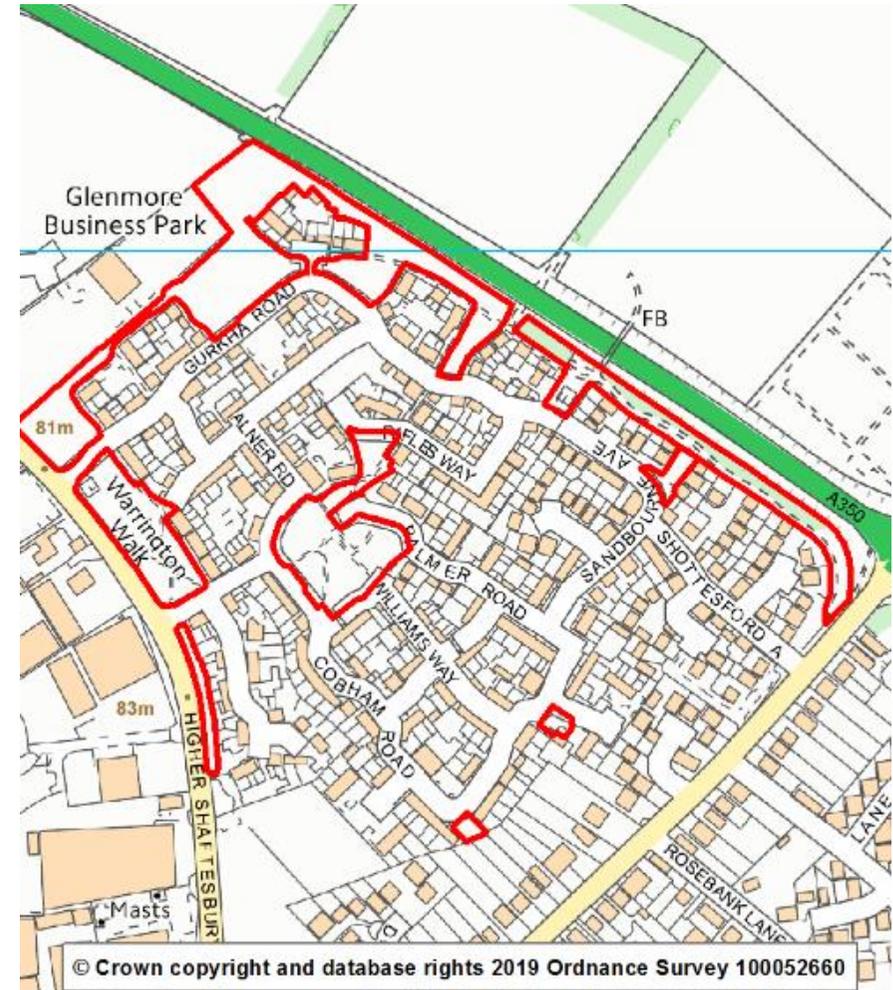


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.01 Ha)

4. Badbury Heights Open Spaces



The sites form several pockets of green open space, as well as some larger green spaces, and buffer zones, situated very close to the community it serves and that are used as amenity areas with planned Play Areas being installed upon completion of land transfers to the Town Council. These areas have been well planned as part of the design of the original development and have served local residents well as anticipated. The space is owned and maintained by Persimmon Homes. Phases 1 & 2 have been handed over to Blandford Forum Town Council. Transfer of phases 3a & 3b is still awaited. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network.

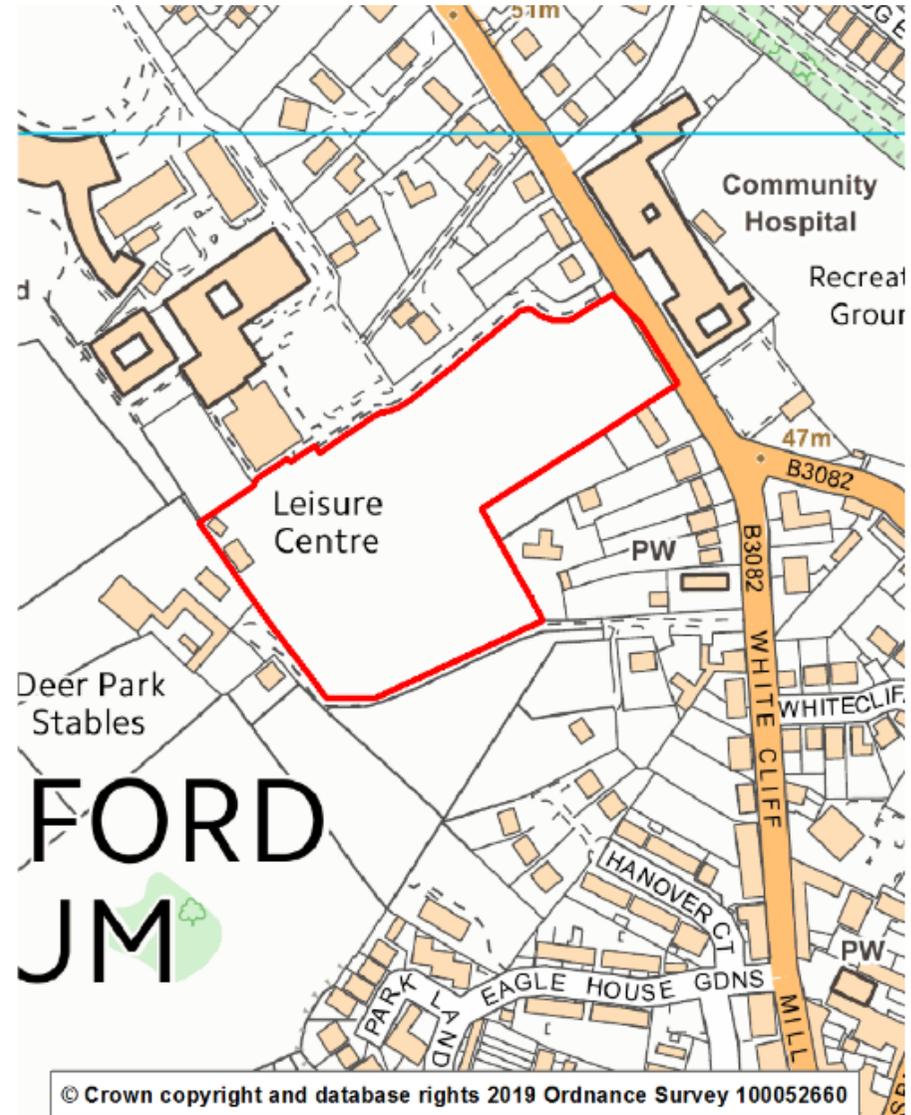


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (1.63 Ha)

5. Land adjacent the Leisure Centre



The site forms a large green open space adjacent to the leisure centre managed by the Blandford School. The space is used as sports pitches and needs to be protected due to the existing shortage of sports pitches in Blandford Forum. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.

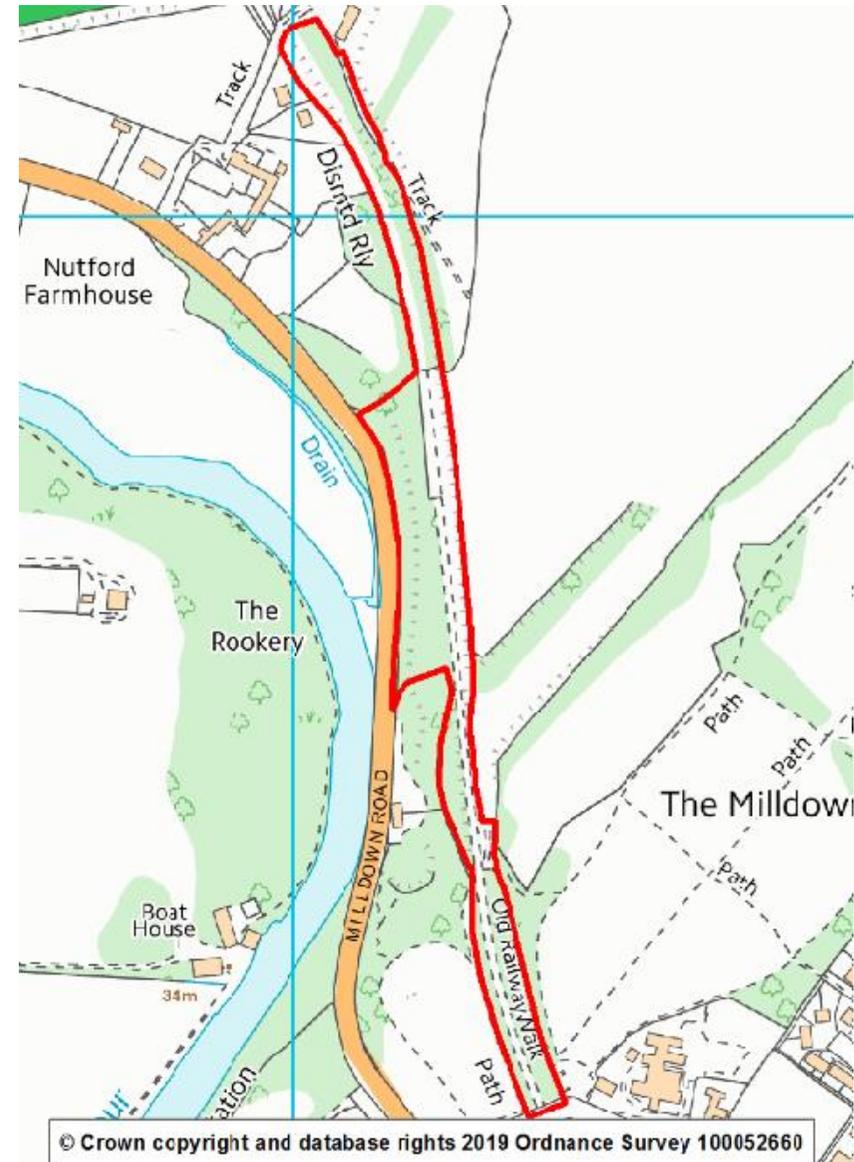


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (2.45 Ha)

6. The Trailway



The Trailway is a walking, cycling and horse riding route that runs along the route of the old Somerset and Dorset Railway line and takes you through some picturesque villages of the Blackmore vale. The old railway line closed to rail traffic in 1966 provides an ideal route for a Trailway as it links many of North Dorset's towns and villages. The trail runs along a surfaced three metre wide track suitable for pushchairs, mobility vehicles, horses, bicycles and walkers. It is owned by NDDC and maintained by the North Dorset Countryside Rangers. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms the spine of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area and is central to the community it serves.



Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (3.44Ha)

7. Overton Walk



This extended green area with comparatively young trees is owned by NDDC and administered by Blandford Forum Town Council. It extends for 300m from Heddington Drive to the NE to Mortain Close and provides a pleasant open area with trees and wildlife within the Damory estate. It provides a safe route for pedestrians through the estate and a pleasant gathering place for children and adults. It meets the requirements for a Local Green Space. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.



Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.5Ha)

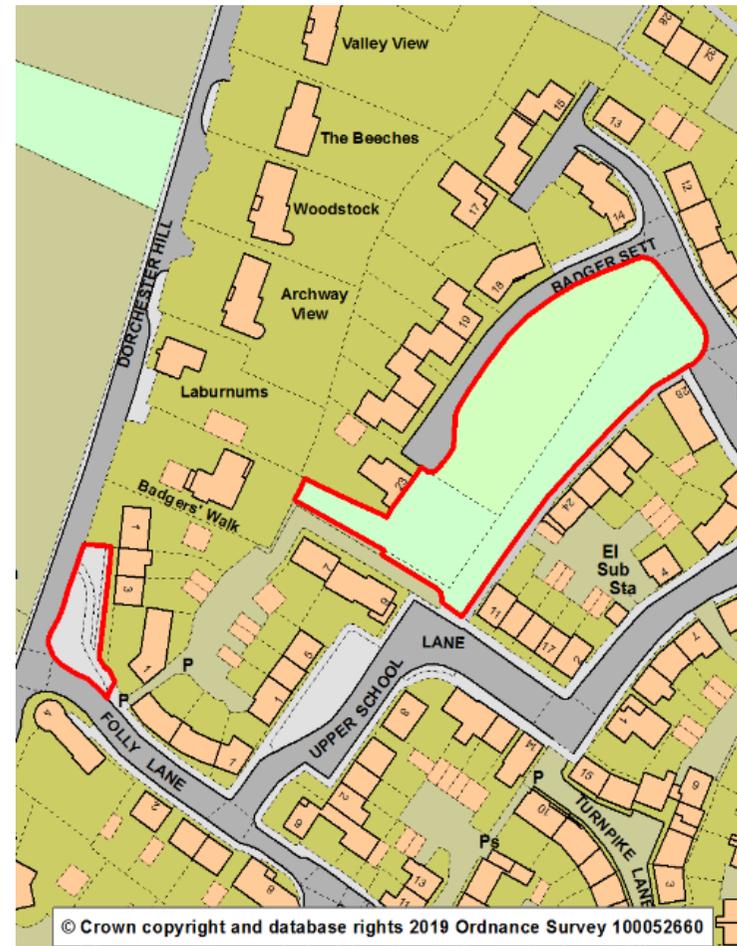
Local Green Spaces Photographs 2018 – Blandford St. Mary

The village of Blandford St Mary is set in the heart of Dorset, adjacent to Blandford Forum and has an estimated population of 1,600 (DCC 2016 estimate). A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. The sites identified in this study are to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

8. Coppice and Badger Sett



The site forms a small area of land which gives its name to the surrounding ring of houses (70m x 30m) lies at the heart of the new Bryanston Hills housing estate built between 2001 and 2004. The ground includes wildlife activity. Because of the road layout between Dorchester Hill and Blandford St Mary primary school it is the only undeveloped green space within the village and provides a welcome area of green within the development. The land is owned by NDDC and maintained by the North Dorset Countryside Rangers. The site is to be designated as a Local Green Space as defined in the NPPF and forms part of the Green Infrastructure Network for the area.



Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.33Ha)

Local Green Spaces Photographs 2018 – Bryanston

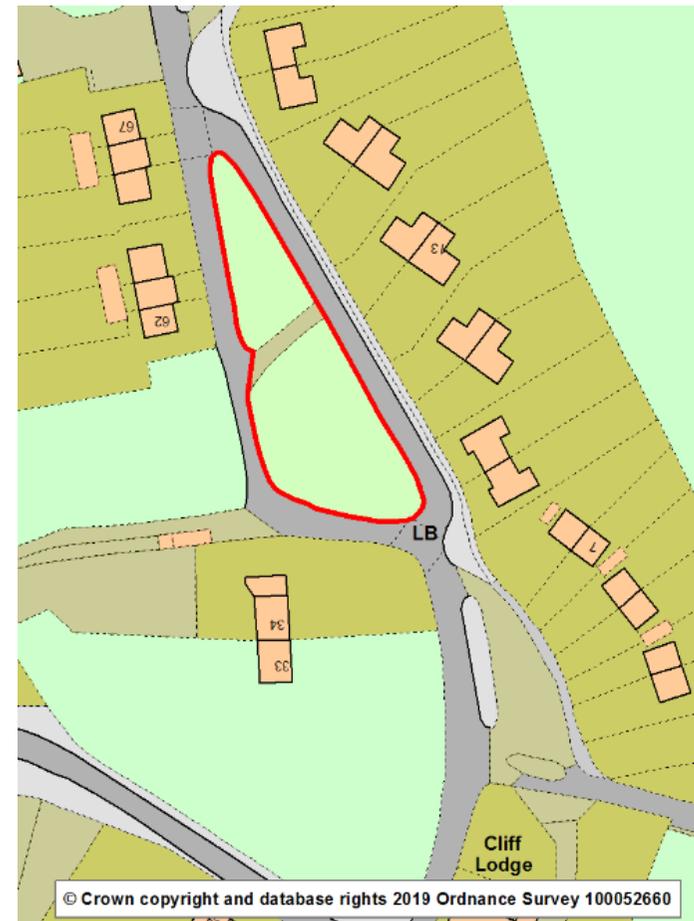
The village of Bryanston is set in the heart of Dorset and has an estimated population of 890 (DCC 2013 estimate).

A number of sites throughout the parish are considered valuable Green Space assets for the community and some already carry protection which will continue to form part of the Green Infrastructure Network. There are two sites identified in this study that are to be designated as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

10. Village Entrance



A central island surrounded by roads at the entrance to the village providing an unspoilt attractive green area and natural setting. This open area grows wild flowers and provides a refuge for wildlife. It is proposed this area is designated as Local Green Space.

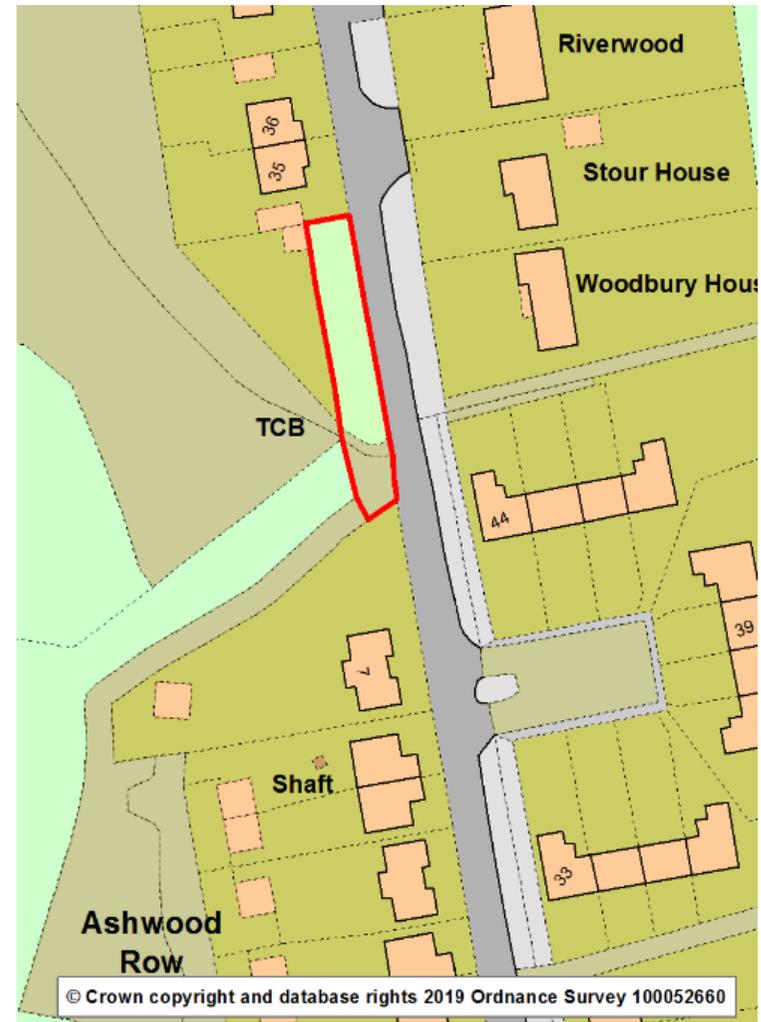


Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.5 Ha)

11. Central Island and Notice Board



Central green area with telephone box, kissing gate and the village Notice Board. The telephone box is used as a community book exchange resource and traditional assembly point. The kissing gate marks the start of a Public right of Way. This area is proposed to be designated Local Green Space



Plan showing extent of Local Green Space (0.11 Ha)