

Schedule B - Local Green Space

The National Planning Policy Framework, para. 76, defines Local Green Space as follows:

The 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.

The phrase “local in character” is open to various interpretations. Here it is interpreted as meaning an area that is contained within clearly defined physical boundaries and occupies only a very small fraction of the total Neighbourhood Plan area.

Residents' views

In our survey of all parishioners (see Evidence Base), the following open green spaces were mentioned as being particularly important to them:

1. The recreation ground and playground on The Street
2. The former BMX track
3. The fields around Clapham Church
4. The fields to the South of The Street
5. The fields to the North of The Street
6. The fields along the Long Furlong
7. Clapham Woods (to the North of Clapham village)
8. Clapham Common woods (to the South of Clapham village, known as ‘The Harehams’)

In addition, many respondents simply said ‘All of them’, ‘All the surrounding countryside’ or ‘All the fields and woods’.

The reasons put forward for valuing these particular areas generally emphasised the following points:

- Beautiful views
- Peace and quiet
- Safe places for children to play
- Rural character
- Trees, flowers and wildlife
- Walking
- Ease of access from the main settlements

There were also many mentions of the Village Hall grounds, but these – although they belong to the parishioners of both villages – actually lie in Patching Parish (we understand that it is the intention of Patching Parish Council to designate these grounds as Local Green Space in their own Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Areas selected for designation as Local Green Space

The three areas which were selected for specific designation, and thus protection, as Local Green Space, were:

1. The recreation ground and playground in The Street
2. The former BMX track
3. The fields around Clapham Church

These areas were evaluated against the NPPF criteria as follows:

	<i>Proximity</i>	<i>Special significance</i>					<i>Local character</i>
		<i>Beauty</i>	<i>Historic</i>	<i>Recreation</i>	<i>Tranquillity</i>	<i>Wildlife</i>	
1. 'The Rec'	✓		✓	✓			✓
2. Former BMX track	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
3. 'Church Field'	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓

1. The Recreation Ground

It is clear from the large number of respondents who mentioned 'The Rec' that it has great importance to the residents of the Parish, not only those who live in Clapham Village itself but also those in Clapham Common and elsewhere, who make use of the shop and playground, both when bringing children to the School and at other times. It is attractively placed on The Street, in the middle of the village, and is widely considered as the 'village green'; it is the only open space directly on The Street.

The historical context is that the ground was given in 1930 by Mrs Gwendoline Somerset (the grandmother of the present landowner, Mr FitzRoy Somerset) to five Trustees, to be held in perpetuity for the benefit of the residents of the village. This was in exchange for the diversion of a footpath near to Clapham Farm House.

The present Trustees have not been able to make available a copy of the Trust Deed (it is not lodged with the Charity Commission), but have given us to understand that it states that 'the demised land shall not be used for any purpose other than as a playing field or public open space for the benefit of the parishioners of Clapham Parish'.

Notwithstanding the above, the Village Shop and Post Office was erected on a small part of the land, with the consent of the Trustees, in 1988. The original Portakabin has been slightly extended since that time; it has now lost its Post Office function, but also operates as a Café. If the Portakabin is to continue to be used as a café, SDNPA Planning Department has ruled that substantial improvements must be made to comply with Environmental Health requirements. The original lease to the Shop and Post Office included a condition that, if it were to cease trading, the ground on which it stood should be restored to its previous condition (i.e. as a level grassed area).

A red Chestnut Tree stands in front of the shop/café; this is a much loved feature of the village. It was originally planted in 1935 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of George V and Queen Mary. It was recently diagnosed as diseased, but the latest advice received is that it is likely to survive for at least another 10 years before needing to be replaced, and our Parish Tree Warden is therefore seeking to have a Tree Preservation Order placed on it.

The Recreation Ground also includes a playground with play equipment for younger children (swings, slide etc.). This is very popular with children and their parents, although older children complain that it is not suitable for them. However, the equipment is nearing the end of its safe life, and Arun DC (who currently maintain both the grassed area and the playground) have stated that they will be unable to replace it for budgetary reasons.

We included a question in our survey on what changes, if any, people would like to see to the Recreation Ground (see Evidence Base). Responses tended to emphasise improvements to the children's playground, and improvements to the shop/café; a few also suggested that part of the area could be used for off-street parking, although others were equally strongly against this.

We also carried out a survey of the children in the Parish, to ascertain what they would like in its place, and some very imaginative ideas were put forward (see Evidence Base); these have been passed to the Parish Council for future consideration, as it appears that responsibility for maintenance may fall on the Council at some point.

2. The former BMX track

A piece of open land at the Eastern end of Clapham Common (see map) was donated to Arun District Council by the landowner, Mr FitzRoy Somerset, at about the time that the new A27/A280 junction was built (c. 1996).

Arun DC created a BMX track on the land, with soil mounds, ramps etc. However, this was not much used and in 2012, when Arun were forced for budgetary reasons to change their policy with regard to play areas, they decided they could no longer maintain the BMX track. In 2013, after consultation with local residents, the earth works were therefore levelled, and the ground now receives only minimal maintenance and is therefore reverting to scrub woodland, which is good for wildlife, though not so attractive for children's recreation.

A couple of enterprising youngsters from Clapham Common carried out a survey of their fellows to find out what they would like to happen to the land, and presented their findings to the Parish Council. They envisaged reinstating some kind of play area (e.g. skateboarding), while also preserving wildlife habitats.

We included a question in our survey on the future of this area (see Evidence Base). Suggestions included replacement of the BMX track, alternative play/recreational uses, and creation of a wildlife area; more frequent grass cutting and general maintenance were frequently mentioned.

All the proposals for the future use of this piece of land have been passed to the Parish Council and it is hoped that, with the help of local residents, better use can be made of it in future. It is conveniently placed immediately adjacent to Clapham Common and is therefore a safe place for local children to play (it can also be safely accessed via a public footpath, rather than along the A280, from Clapham Village).

3. The fields around Clapham Church

Clapham Church (a 12th-century listed building on what is believed to have been originally a Saxon site) now lies slightly apart from the main part of Clapham Village, on the edge of Clapham Woods. Its only neighbours are the attractive and historic (listed) Church House and the (recently restored) Tudor Barn – an ancient barn with Victorian farm buildings around a courtyard.

The view Northwards towards this cluster of historic and attractive buildings is very precious to Clapham residents. A late 20th-century development, Church Close, faces directly onto the field (which we have designated as 'Church Field' in the NDP) separating the building cluster from the rest of the village; other villagers enjoy the view from Church Lane, which leads to the Church and Clapham Woods and is thus the starting point for walks in the woods. This field was purchased a few years ago by the owner of Church House, and is currently used for equestrian purposes.

Arun DC's 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' states that:

'The second area, in contrast with more tightly knit character and appearance of Clapham Street is based on St Mary's Church, Church House and Clapham Farm. These form a very attractive, informal, traditional and loose group of buildings of particular architectural and historic interest; the Church dating from the 12th or 13th centuries and the Church House, originally a large farmhouse is a Grade II* star building of timber frame construction dating from the 17th century or earlier. The field to the south separates the group from the built up area based on Clapham Street and provides an open and rural setting and foreground to St Mary's Church, Church House and Clapham Farm.'

Despite the fact that this field is, like all the other fields in the Parish, designated for agricultural use, we felt that – in view of its key importance in providing views from the village towards some of its most historic and beautiful buildings – it was nevertheless important to ensure that this particular field was given all possible protection.

Areas not selected for designation

The areas not selected for designation were as follows:

4. The fields to the South of The Street
5. The fields to the North of The Street
6. The fields along the Long Furlong
7. Clapham Woods
8. Clapham Common woods ('The Harehams')

The importance of these areas of fields and woodlands to the attractively rural aspect of the Parish is not in question. However, our reasoning was that, in the case of both fields and woodlands, the areas were too extensive to qualify as Local Green Space. In addition, the fields are already protected as agricultural land, and the woods as Ancient Woodland, in both cases within the context of both the National Park and (in part) the Conservation Area.

In addition, Arun DC's 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' (see Evidence Base) states that:

'the rural character and setting of Clapham Street is ... enhanced by the clear demarcation between the settlement and the fields and rural area beyond'.