

Local Plan Open Land Area Designations – Wells-next-the-Sea

Summary: To consider the designation of additional Open Land Area designations at Wells-next-the-Sea.

Recommendations: **It is recommended that Members endorse the additional Open Land Area Designation for site WEL22 (Wells East Quay) and recommends it to Cabinet for inclusion in the Local Plan.**

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| Cabinet Member(s) | Ward(s) affected |
| All Members | Wells next the Sea |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Alongside consultation on the draft Local Plan the Council also published and sought comments on its proposals for Open Land Area designations. These designated areas lie mainly within the adopted development boundaries of the selected settlements and without such designation would be subject to policies which would otherwise generally allow for their development. The term Open Land Area includes a variety of spaces such as formal play areas, sports pitches, school grounds, churchyards and car parks and private land. To qualify for designation it is not necessary for there to be public access, the principal qualifying criteria are that they should be generally free of built development (green), publicly viewable, and make a positive contribution to the character of the area as a result of being 'green' and generally free of built development (openness). Once designated, development proposals on these sites would need to comply with draft Policy ENV7 which aims to limit the types of development that would be permissible.
- 1.2 The consultation exercise sought comments on the Council's proposals and also allowed for additional candidate sites to be nominated for consideration. Three sites, all located on Wells Quay, were put forward and are considered in this report. (Details attached at **Appendix 1**)

2. Approach to Designation.

- 2.1 Policy ENV7 refers to a number of different types of open space. Each type will either have an established formal open space use, such as recreation grounds or sport pitches, or will make a positive contribution to the character of the area as a result of being undeveloped. The policy discourages development unless it would enhance the recreation use of the site or in the case of sports pitches, alternative provision is made in the locality.

- 2.2 Each of the proposed designations has been subject to a standardized assessment which takes into account a range of factors such as existing use, public prominence, accessibility and so on. No single factor determines if a site should, or should not, be designated but the site should be green, generally free of built development and make a positive contribution to the character of the area which can be appreciated from public vantage points.

3. Additional nominated sites Assessment

- 3.1 In response to Local Plan consultation three additional sites were nominated for consideration. Maps and assessment details are attached **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 All three sites form part of the land between the public highway known as East Quay and the harbour. The first site (WEL20) is located adjacent to a residential property named 'Shipwrights' and consists of a small grass and gravel area that appears to be used as private car parking associated with nearby properties. A small area of this land has been enclosed with low hedges and has the characteristics of a small residential garden. The second site (WEL21) is the main quayside and harbour area, which is part public car park and part working portside. The final site assessed (WEL22) is a medium sized open grassed area that appears to allow public access.
- 3.3 All three sites offer iconic open views across the harbour, the channel and the marshes toward the sea. This openness contributes to the intrinsic character and setting of the area. The 'Shipwrights' site is predominately in private use, although, these current uses do not adversely impact on the openness or character of the area. The assessment has concluded that, of the three areas, only the grassed area (WEL22) satisfies **the criteria** to be designated as amenity greenspace.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that Members endorse the additional Open Land Area Designation for site WEL22 (Wells East Quay) and recommends it to Cabinet for inclusion in the Local Plan.

5. Legal Implications and Risks

- 5.1 The Council must produce a Local Plan which complies with various regulatory and legal requirements and in determining its policy approaches must be justified and underpinned by up to date and proportionate evidence, the application of a consistent methodology and take account of public feedback and national policy and guidance.

6. Financial Implications and Risks

- 6.1 Failure to undertake plan preparation in accordance with the regulations and NPPF is likely to render the plan 'unsound' at examination and result in the need to return to earlier stages. Substantial additional costs would be incurred.

Appendices

Open Land Area Assessment Results – additional sites at Wells