

**Green Areas  
Designations**

**DLP BRIEFING NOTE 60**

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## Green Areas Designation consultation

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles and Environment Secretary Caroline Spellman have announced their intention to give people the ability to protect environmentally and locally important special green spaces. This announcement follows the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper on 7<sup>th</sup> June which includes proposals to give communities new powers to designate protected green areas as part of local neighbourhood plans.

The White Paper states:

*“We will consult later this year on proposals for a new Green Areas Designation that will give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces that have significant importance to their local communities and aim to introduce the Designation by April 2012. We propose that green spaces should be identified in neighbourhood plans and local plans which complement and do not undermine investment in homes, jobs and other essential services. Given the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities the Government considers the new designation should offer suitably strong protection to localised areas that are demonstrably special and will consult on that basis”.*

The measures were first published in the 2010 Coalition Agreement, in which the Government outlined its commitment to:

*“Radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live...”*

Which included:

*“Creating a new designation – similar to SSSIs – to protect greens areas of particular importance to local communities”.*

The measures will essentially allow local communities to designate for special consideration any local green space land they wish, whether they identify its value to be in its natural beauty, its historic resonance, its recreational value, its tranquillity or its importance as a wildlife habitat.

This new Designation is likely to have a profound effect on development opportunities in areas where Neighbourhood Plans are implemented. Under the plans, a community referendum can nominate parks, playing fields or even a pretty view across the fields as a Green Designation Area (GDAs). As long as the whole community agrees and the new designation fits into local plans, it will be given protection in a similar way that current rules stop development in national parks or areas of outstanding beauty.

Ministers have insisted that their ambitious plans to protect the natural environment and to promote sustainable growth were mutually compatible and have stated that *“protected sites should complement and not undermine investment in homes, jobs and other essential services”*. However, this remains to be seen in practice.

Details on the new Green Areas Designation will come ahead of a formal consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework, with the new power expected to come into force by April 2012.

These provisions could have a fundamental effect on the ability to promote land for future development and will make it essential for any owner or development interest to be aware of and participate in the making of any Local Neighbourhood Plans.

DLP Planning will update you again when further details are published, but if you would like to discuss how these proposals may affect your future development options, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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