

INTRODUCTION

The Natural Environment White Paper ([The Natural Choice](#)): securing the value of nature 2011) highlighted “the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities”.

Green spaces, particularly natural green spaces, located close to local people provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits, including –

- improved mental and physical health
- increased social activity
- increased physical activity
- reduced crime
- improvements to children's learning
- increased voluntary action
- improved community cohesion and sense of belonging
- potential for local food growing
- more attractive places to live, work, play, visit and invest
- enhanced opportunities for wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors
- climate change adaptation for example by flood alleviation

The White Paper recommended that a new Green Areas designation be introduced that would give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces that have significant importance to their local communities.

“ 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”

That recommendation was incorporated into the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) as the new designation of Local Green Spaces.

PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to support local communities in putting forward their local open spaces for formal designation as a Local Green Space in a robust, consistent and transparent manner.

The Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF 2024 provides the following information on Local Green Space designations -

106. 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.

107. 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.

108. Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of this Framework⁴⁵. Additional guidance is provided in the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

Local and Neighbourhood Plans

Local Green Spaces can be designated through the emerging Cotswold Local Plan or through neighbourhood plans. A policy related to Local Green Spaces will be included in the emerging Cotswold Local Plan. Where relevant, an appropriate policy should also be included in neighbourhood plans. The proposed text for the emerging Cotswold Local Plan is included at appendix

PROCESS FOR DESIGNATION

Step 1

If your community is considering designating an area as a Local Green Space, it may be helpful to test the site against the “decision tree” in Figure 1 on page 4.

Step 2

Make informal contact with the Council (contact Lesley Davies, Forward Planning) so that we can provide you with help in deciding whether it is worth progressing with the designation process.

Step 3

If the site seems potentially suitable, we will ask you to complete the designation checklist (including all the relevant evidence) see pages 7-12

Step 4

We will review the evidence you have provided and give guidance as to whether we consider the site suitable for designation and whether any additional evidence is required. If the evidence is sufficiently robust and, in the case of designation through the Local Plan, Cotswold District Council considers the site suitable, the designation process can start.

Step 5

If the site is to be designated in the Local Plan, we will consult the owner of the land (if known).

If the site is to be designated in a Neighbourhood Plan, those responsible for producing that plan should consult the owner of the land (if known).

Step 6

The site can then be considered for inclusion in the appropriate draft Local or Neighbourhood Plan. The deadline for inclusion in the emerging Cotswold Local Plan is Monday 6th October.

Step 7

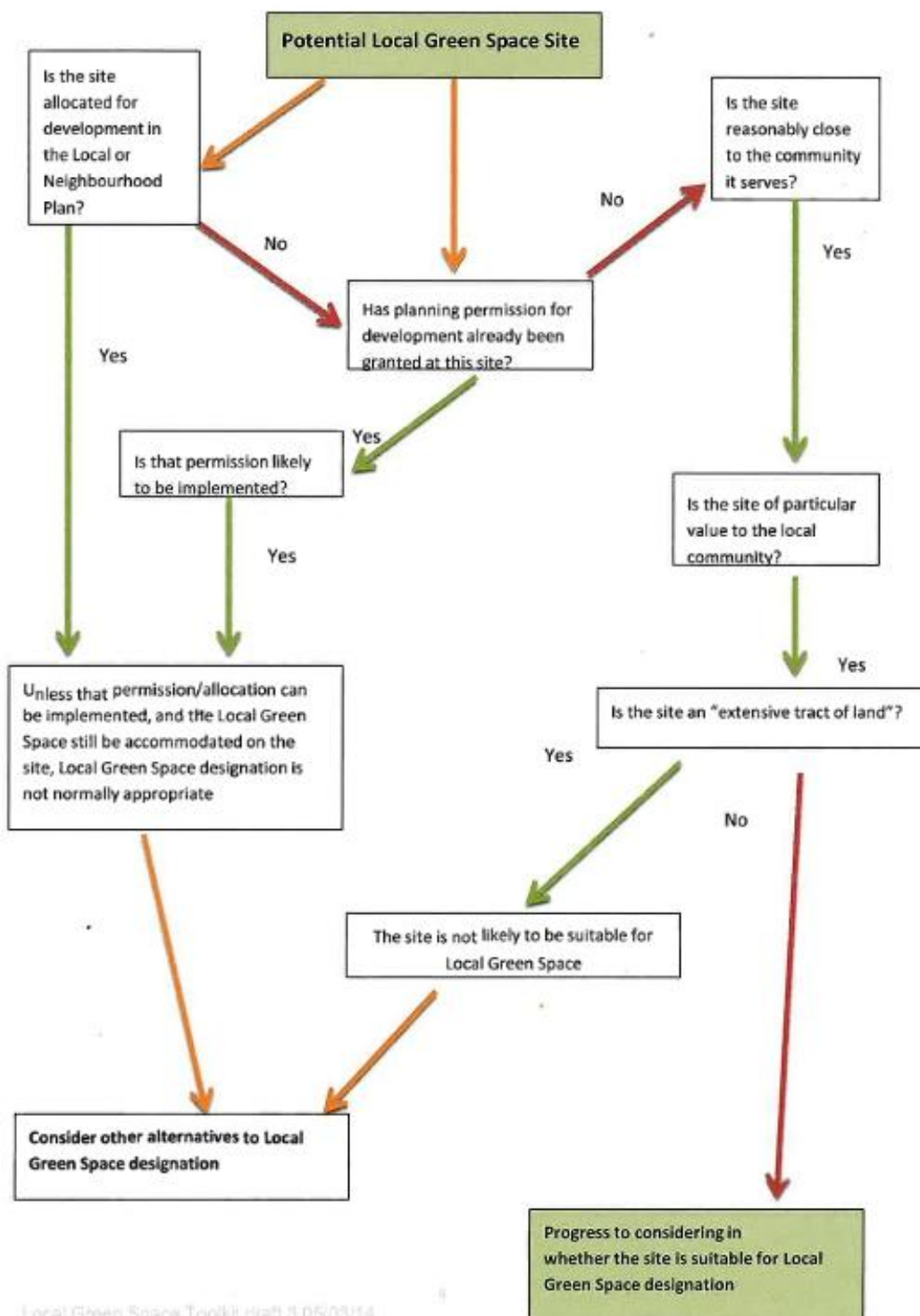
The site designation will be “tested” through the planning process. Anybody can object to policies or sites in a plan during the consultation process and these consultation responses must be considered. Neighbourhood Plans will also be subject to a local referendum. Both Local and Neighbourhood Plans are formally scrutinised by a Planning Inspector or an Independent Examiner, who will ensure that the plans are robust and based on sound evidence.

Step 8

Formal designation when the relevant plan is approved.

It is important to note that the designation process could take some time and that it may be worth looking in parallel at other means of protecting or enhancing the site.

Figure 1 -Decision tree



Any type of green space could be suitable for Local Green Space designation from recreational land with a sports pavilion or the area around a war memorial to allotments or an urban space that provides a tranquil oasis.

As Local Green Space designation means that development is highly unlikely to be permitted on a site, there is a strong possibility that landowners and others will challenge the designation. To meet that challenge the designation must be based on solid evidence that the site meets the relevant criteria. This will be easier to demonstrate if the checklist in this toolkit is completed and the relevant evidence provided.

A potential Local Green Space site must meet the criteria set out in the NPPF, and further detailed in the National Planning Practice Guidance. These criteria are not specific – they do not give set distances or areas, but act as guidance which should then be interpreted at a local level.

In order to ensure that any designation in the District is robust, we have created a checklist against which potential Local Green Space sites should be tested.

Not every potential site will meet every criteria however all sites must meet the following criteria in the checklist –

Table 1.

Point 2.1	not with an extant planning permission within which the Local Green Space could not be accommodated
Point 2.2	not allocated for development in the relevant Neighbourhood Plan or the Local Plan, unless it can be shown that the Local Plan housing allocation is not strategic and can be re-located somewhere else in the neighbourhood plan area; or alternatively that the Local Green Space could be incorporated within the site as part of the allocated development
Point 3.2	Not an “extensive tract of land”
Point 3.3	“local in character”
Point 5	in “proximity to the community it serves”
Point 6	“demonstrably special to the local community”

And all sites must meet at least one of the following criteria in the Checklist-

Table 2.

Point 7	“particular local significance ... because of its beauty”
Point 8	“particular local significance ... because of its historic significance”
Point 9	“particular local significance ... because of its recreational value”
Point 10	“particular local significance ... because of its tranquillity”
Point 11	“particular local significance ... because of its wildlife”
Point 12	“particular local significance ... for any other reason”

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) was originally developed by English Nature, but has subsequently been revised by Natural England to create the new Accessible Greenspace Standard (AGS) that is included in the GI Framework.

To provide certainty, [Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards](#) (AGS) 2023 is used to define the likely size of a suitable Local Green Space and its distance from the local community.

[Accessible Greenspace Standard](#) (AGS)

The new Accessible Greenspace Standard (AGS), which is one of the 5 Headline GI Standards included in the GI Framework- Principles and Standards for England. The Accessible Greenspace Standard covers a broader range of greenspace than the original ANGSt, while retaining a focus on accessible natural greenspace. It measures six categories of publicly accessible greenspace, of increasing size and distance from home.

A Local Green Space should ideally be located within a 1km, 15-minute walk of the community it serves. Please see the table below. Given the rural nature of the District, it may be necessary to relax these requirements in certain circumstances.

A site of over 20ha (50 acres) and a 35-minute walk would be considered to be "an extensive tract of land" and therefore, not suitable for designation as a Local Green Space.

Table 3.

Type of Space	Minimum size	Maximum distance	Maximum Journey
Local Greenspace or Doorstep Greenspace	2 ha	300m	5 min walk
Neighbourhood Greenspace	0.5 ha	200m	Under 5 min
Wider Neighbourhood Greenspace	10 ha	1 km	15 min walk
District Green Space	20 ha	2 km	35 min walk
Sub Regional Green Space	100 ha	5 km	15 –20 min cycle
	500 ha	10 km	30-40 min cycle

Notes: Distances given are actual walking distances. Actual walking distance will be measured though network analysis in due course. However, in the meantime, the Green Infrastructure Mapping uses a straight-line distance from home to the boundary of the greenspace in analyses of the AGS standards. - Where possible all greenspaces should be accessible by public transport and, or safe active travel routes. - The Accessible Greenspace Standards do not cover formal sports provision, for which Sport England is responsible; nor play provision, which is covered by Play England. - The above diagram uses a walking speed

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of 60 metres per minute, which is the average for people of 60 years and teenagers. It uses a cycling speed of 20 kilometres per hour as an average for inexperienced cyclists.

CHECKLIST AND CRITERIA FOR LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION

1	General Information Name and address of site <i>Some sites have several names, and all known names should be given</i>	Tick if relevant evidence provided
1.1		
1.2	Site location plan <i>The plan can be at any scale but must show the location and boundaries of the site. Please indicate the scale.</i> <i>Insert here or attach separately</i>	
1.3	Organisation or individual proposing site for designation <i>This will normally be a Town or Parish Council or a recognised community group</i>	
1.4	Ownership of site if known <i>Information on land ownership can be obtained from the Land Registry. Some land parcels are not registered however local people may know the owner.</i>	
1.5	Is the owner of the site aware of the potential designation? Do they support the designation? (Sites may be designated as Local Green Spaces, even if there are objections from the site owners)	
1.6	Photographs of site please <i>attach separately</i>	
1.7	Community served by the potential Local Green Space <i>i.e. does the site serve the whole village/town or a particular geographic area or group of people?</i>	
2	Planning History	
2.1	Is there currently a planning application for this site? If permitted/allocated, could part of the overall site still be used as a Green	

	<i>Further Information – Cotswold District Council – View and comment on</i>	
2.2	Is the site allocated for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan? If allocated, could part of the overall site still be used as a Green Open Space? <i>Further Information – Cotswold District Council – Planning and building -</i>	
3	Size, scale and “local nature” of proposed Local Green Space	
3.1	Area of proposed site <i>It is unlikely that a site of over 20ha (50 acres) would be considered suitable for designation.</i>	
3.2	Is the site an “extensive tract of land”? <i>(Extensive tracts of land cannot be designated as Local Green Space) e.g. how large is it in comparison to other fields; groups of fields; areas of land in the vicinity etc.? Does the site “feel” extensive or more local in scale?</i>	
3.3	Is the proposed site “local in character”? <i>e.g. does the site feel as though it is part of the local area? And why? How does it connect physically, visually and socially to the local area? What is your evidence?</i>	
4	Need for Local Green Space	
4.1	Is there a need for a local green space in this location? <i>e.g. is there a shortage of accessible greenspace in the area? Is there a village needs survey or parish plan that provides evidence of that need. Further information – Accessible Greenspace Standard Cotswold District Council – Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy</i>	
5	Evidence to show that “the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves” <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
5.1	How far is the site from the community it serves? Is the site within 2km of the local community? <i>Possible evidence – a map to show that distance</i>	
5.2	Are there any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes? <i>e.g. railway line; main road Possible evidence – a map showing any potential barriers and how those can be overcome.</i>	

6	Evidence to show that the green area is “demonstrably special to a local community” <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
6.1	Evidence of support from Parish or Town Council <i>e.g. letter of support; Council minutes</i>	
6.2	Evidence of support from other local community groups or individuals. <i>e.g. letters of support; petitions; surveys etc.</i>	
6.3	Evidence of support from community leaders <i>e.g. letters of support from Ward Members; County Councillors; MP etc.</i> <i>Further information on contact details - Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, House of Commons</i>	
6.4	Evidence of support from other groups <i>e.g. letters of support from organisations such as CPRE; Home - CPRE; Cotswold National Landscape; Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; Gloucestershire Rural Community Council; Cotswold Lakes local amenity societies; local schools etc.</i>	
7	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty,” (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
7.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES / NO	
7.2	Describe why the community feels that the site has a particular local significance for its beauty.	
7.3	Site visibility <i>e.g. is it easy to see the site from a public place? Are there long-distance views of the site? Are there views of the site from any key locations?</i>	
7.4	Is the site covered by any landscape or similar designations? <i>e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Conservation Area; Special Landscape Area</i> <i>Further information Natural England; Cotswolds National Landscape; Planning and building - Cotswold District Council</i>	

7.5	Is the site (or the type of site) specifically mentioned in any relevant landscape character assessments or similar documents? <i>e.g. Cotswolds AONB landscape character assessment. Further information – Cotswold District Council; Natural England; Cotswolds Conservation Board</i>	
7.6	Does the site contribute to the setting of a historic building or other special feature?	
7.7	Is the site highlighted in literature or art? <i>e.g. is the site mentioned in a well-known poem or shown in a famous painting?</i>	
8	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance for example because of its historic significance” (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
8.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES / NO	
8.2	Are there any historic buildings or remains on the site? <i>e.g. listed buildings; scheduled ancient monuments ; registered parks and gardens; war memorials; other historic remains or structures.</i> <i>Further information – Cotswold District Council; English Heritage; Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record; Gloucestershire Archives; local history society;</i>	
8.3	Are there any important historic landscape features on the site? <i>e.g. old hedgerows; ancient trees; historic ponds or historic garden features</i> <i>Further information – Cotswold District Council; English Heritage; Request archaeological data from Gloucestershire's Historic Environment</i>	
8.4	Did the site play an important role in the historic development of the village or town? <i>e.g. the old site of the town railway station; the old garden for the manor house etc.</i>	
8.5	Did any important historic events take place on the site?	
8.6	Do any historic rituals take place on the site? <i>e.g. well-dressing; maypole dancing etc.</i>	

9	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its recreational value (including as a playing field)”, (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
9.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES / NO	
9.2	Is the site used for playing sport? <i>If so what sport? How long has it been used for sports provision? Is this sports provision free or is a club membership required?</i> Further information – Sport England	
9.3	Are the public able to physically access the site? <i>e.g. are there any public rights of way across the site? Or adjacent to the site? Has access been allowed on a discretionary basis? Is there public access to the whole site or only part? Is there good disabled access to the site? (A site can still be designated even if there is no public access.)</i> Further information – Gloucestershire County Council	
9.4	Is the site used by the local community for informal recreation? And since when? <i>e.g. dog walking; sledging; ball games etc</i>	
10	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its tranquillity” (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
10.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES / NO	
10.2	Do you consider the site to be tranquil? <i>e.g. are there are any roads or busy areas close by?</i>	
10.3	Is the site within a recognised tranquil area? <i>e.g. within the Campaign to Protect Rural England's tranquillity maps</i>	
11	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of the richness of its wildlife”; (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
11.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	

	YES / NO	
11.2	Is the site formally designated for its wildlife value? <i>e.g. as a site of special scientific interest; a key wildlife site etc</i> Further information - Natural England ; Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records	
11.3	Are any important habitats or species found on the site? <i>e.g. habitats and species listed in the UK priority habitats and species lists or in the Cotswold Water Park or Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plans or protected species or on the red/amber lists of birds of conservation concern.</i> Further information - Natural England ; Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records ; National Biodiversity Network ; Cotswold Water Park Trust ; RSPB	
11.4	What other wildlife of interest has been found on the site? Further information - Natural England ; Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records ; National Biodiversity Network ; Cotswold Water Park Trust	
11.5	Is the site part of a long term study of wildlife by members of the local community? <i>e.g. long-term monitoring of breeding birds.</i>	
12	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for any other reason”; (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
12.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES / NO	
12.2	Are there any other reasons why the site has a particular local significance for the local community?	

ALTERNATIVES TO LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION

If during the process it becomes evident that the site is not appropriate for local green space designation, there are other options that can be investigated.

Agreements with land-owners

It may be possible for local communities to reach either formal or informal agreements with the owner of the site to ensure access to the site for local people. This may be an appropriate option where the site owner has a long-term connection with the local area, for example the owner of a large historic estate. It may be possible for the land-owner to dedicate the site as “open access land”.

Further information:

[Right of way and open access land - GOV.UK](#)

Community Purchase

In some instances local communities have purchased important sites to ensure that they remain in community control in perpetuity. The ownership can lie with the Town or Parish Council or with a specific trust.

Village Green status

Anyone can apply to register land as a green if it has been used by local people for lawful sports and pastimes „as of right“ (ie without permission, force or secrecy) for at least 20 years.

Further information:

[Town and village greens: how to register](#)
[Open Spaces Society](#)

Local Nature Reserves

A Local Nature Reserve (LNR) provides people with special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. Local Nature Reserves are designated by district or county councils, and the Local Authority must control the LNR through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner.

Further information:

[Natural England](#)

Assets of Community Value

The Community Right to Bid gives community groups a fairer chance to prepare and bid to buy community buildings and facilities that are important to them. This could include village shops, pubs or allotments. The right covers private as well as public assets. It is important to nominate land and buildings to be part of the register of „assets of community value“, which is held by the Local Authority (Cotswold District Council). If something on this register is offered for sale, the community then have up to six months to prepare a bid.

Further information:

www.gov.uk
[My Community Rights](#)
Cotswold District Council – [Community right to bid](#)

APPENDIX 1: DRAFT COTSWOLD LOCAL PLAN POLICY AND SUPPORTING TEXT

Draft Supporting Text

The NPPF makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to those communities, where development will not be permitted except in very special circumstances. These Local Green Spaces can be designated through the local plan or through neighbourhood plans. The following sites have been proposed as Local Green Spaces through the local plan consultation process –

A

B

C

Draft Policy

Development will only be permitted within a Local Green Space where there are very special circumstances, which would outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space. Particular attention will be paid to the evidence presented by the local community when assessing development presented by the local community when assessing development proposals that are likely to affect a designated Local Green Space.

Glossary of Terms

Accessible Greenspace

Accessible Greenspace is defined as a greenspace that is specifically provided FOR public access, or one to which the public would usually expect to access (such as a cemetery), or one over which there is a public RIGHT to open access, and deemed likely to be accessible to the public at any reasonable time, free to entry and available for a range of pastimes (although some sites may be closed to the public overnight and there may be fees for parking a vehicle). Accessible greenspaces are available to all, meaning that every reasonable effort is made to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2020. There are a range of types of greenspaces included within the definition of publicly accessible greenspace (listed under Green Infrastructure).

WEB REFERENCES

Natural Environment White Paper – The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

National Planning Policy Framework.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

National Planning Practice Guidance.

[Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/AccessibleGreenspaceStandard.aspx>

Natural England – Landscape

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/default.aspx>

Natural England - mapping

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/maps/default.aspx>

Natural England – Local Nature Reserves

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/lnr/>

Land Registry

<http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/>

Cotswold District Council – planning applications

[View and comment on planning applications - Cotswold District Council](#)

Cotswold District Council – planning policy

[Planning policy - Cotswold District Council](#)

Cotswold District Council – Green Infrastructure Strategy

[Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)

Cotswold District Council – Community right to bid

[Community Right to Bid - Cotswold District Council](#)

Gloucestershire County Council – Find your Councillor

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Gloucestershire County Council – public rights of way <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/prow>

House of Commons – find your MP

<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

Campaign to Protect Rural England – home page <http://www.cpre.org.uk/>

Campaign to Protect Rural England – tranquil places

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places>

Cotswolds Conservation Board

<http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/>

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

<http://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/>

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council <http://www.grcc.org.uk/>

Cotswold Water Park Trust

<http://www.waterpark.org/>

English Heritage

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for- england/>

Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/her>

Gloucestershire Archives

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/article/107703/Archives-Homepage>

Sport England

<http://www.sportengland.org>

/

Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental

Records <http://www.gcer.co.uk/>

National Biodiversity

Network

<http://www.nbn.org.uk/>

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/BoCC_tcm9-217852.pdf

Town and village greens: how to register

[https://www.gov.uk/town-and-village-greens-how-to-](https://www.gov.uk/town-and-village-greens-how-to-register)

[register](https://www.gov.uk/town-and-village-greens-how-to-register) Open Spaces Society [http://www.oss.org.uk/what-](http://www.oss.org.uk/what-we-do/village-greens/)

[we-do/village-greens/](http://www.oss.org.uk/what-we-do/village-greens/)

My Community Rights

<http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/community-right-to-bid/>

www.gov.uk – Community right to bid

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/giving-people-more-power-over-what-happens-in-their-neighbourhood/supporting-pages/community-right-to-bid>

www.gov.uk – open access land

<https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/open-access-land>