

PITSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LOCAL GREEN SPACES REPORT

MAY 2015



This report has been prepared for the purposes of the emerging Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan, formal consultation on the “pre-submission” version of which begins on 1 June 2015.

This report sets out the conclusions of the NDP’s Steering Group, appointed by Pitstone Parish Council, as to which sites it is proposed to designate as Local Green Space and the reasons for doing so. It follows the assessment by the NDP Steering Group and its specialist Sub-Groups of a considerably greater number of potential Local Green Space sites within Pitstone Parish.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

In order for a site to qualify for designation as a Local Green Space, it must meet the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This requires that the site in question:

- is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- 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)
- is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

PRINCIPLES ADOPTED

A vast number of sites were considered for potential designation as Local Green Spaces. Those actually designated fall into one (or more) of four distinct categories:

- those (generally small) areas of Pitstone’s “built environment” which are considered most vital to its open, rural feel;
- those sites used for sports and other recreational activities;
- those on the immediate periphery of the settlement with public access and in regular use by those on foot; and

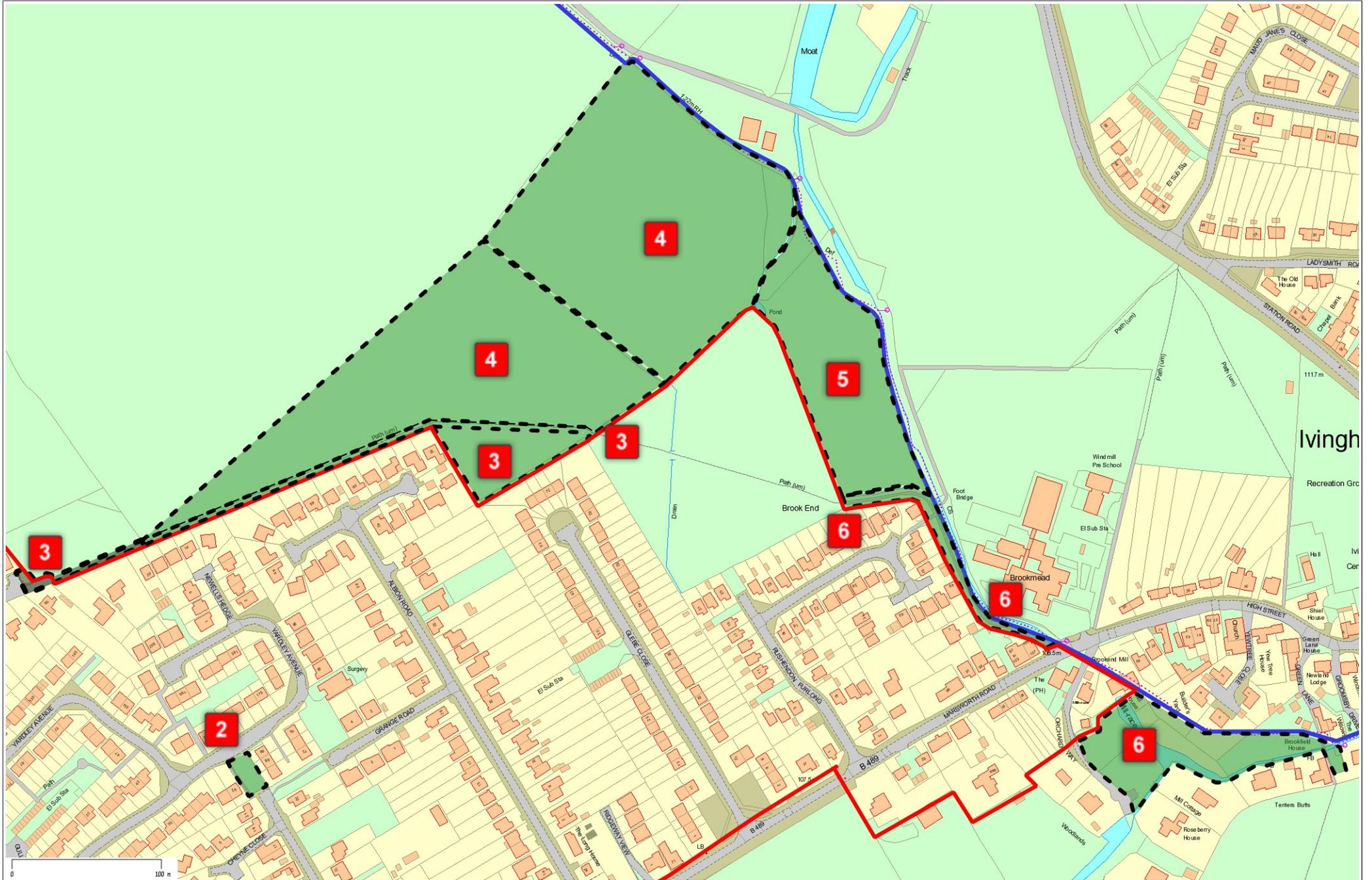
- those which (without necessarily offering public access) fulfil a specific function to the local community, that is reflected in the aspirations and policy objectives of the emerging Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan.

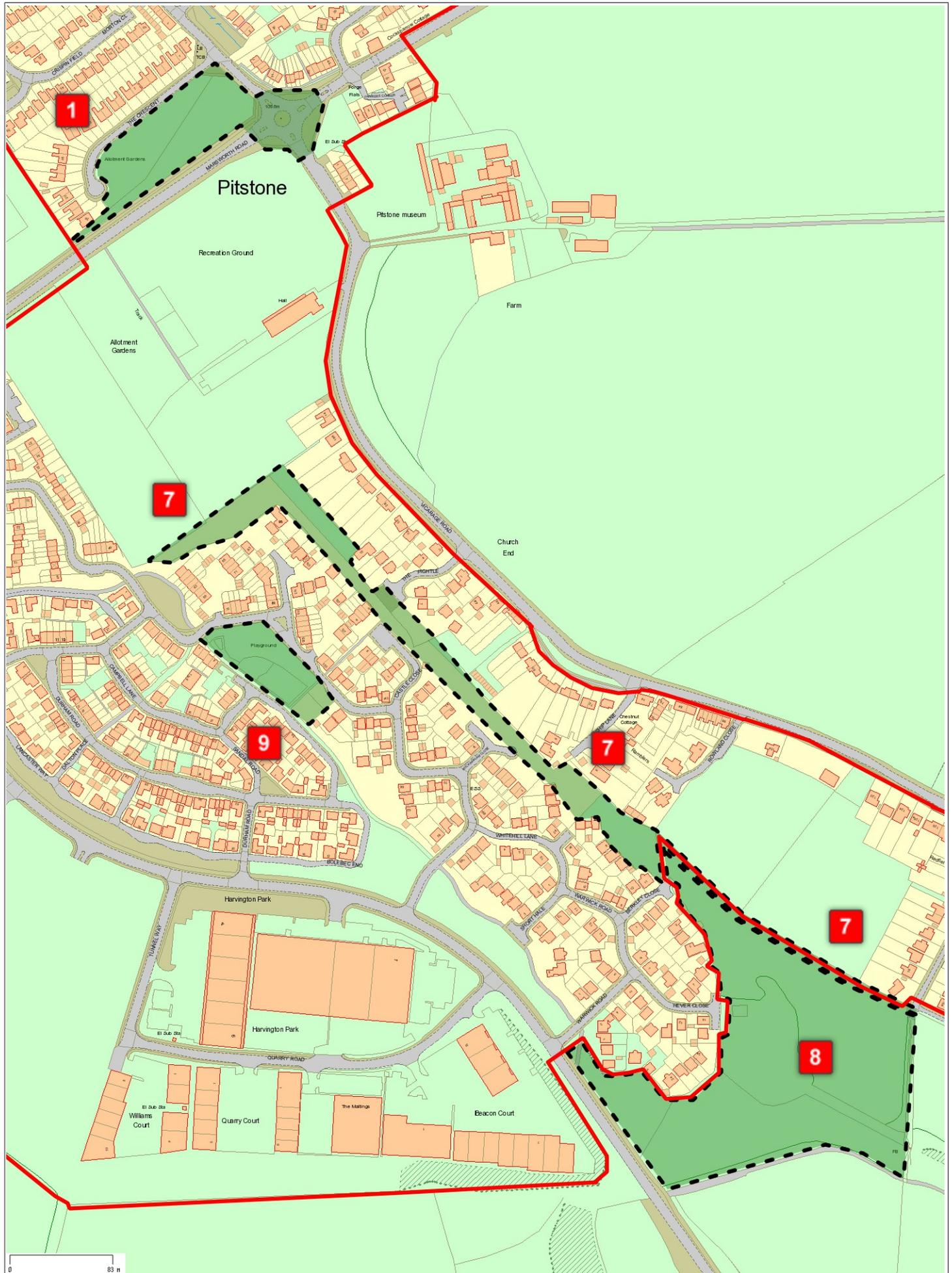
PITSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The pre-submission version of the PNP proposes the following nine Local Green Space designations.

1. Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road, currently in use either as informal allotments or as public open space, together with land to the east of the Marsworth Road roundabout (including that roundabout itself).
2. Land connecting Yardley Avenue and Queen Street.
3. Woodland and open path eastwards from and including the end of Chequers Lane, towards Brook End.
4. Land lying to the north of that footpath (two separate parcels).
5. Land to the east of the Rushendon Furlong extension and to the north of the far corner of the existing / original site.
6. Land adjoining the brook at the eastern end of the village to the north and south of Marsworth Road, which forms an important buffer between Pitstone and Ivinghoe.
7. Woodland path from Church Road to Windsor Road (Stirling Place / junction with Corfe Road) and adjoining areas of open and green space.
8. Large area of public open space to the south-east of the Castlemead development, predominantly to the south and east of Hever Close.
9. Windsor Road (children's play space and adjoining open land).

These are illustrated in diagrammatic form on the two next-following pages of this report, and numbered accordingly. The maps also appear in the consultation edition of the Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan itself.





DESIGNATED SITES: COMPLIANCE WITH THE NPPF

Each of the designated sites meet the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In the following pages of this report we examine the particular characteristics of each such parcel of land, on a site-by-site basis, with photographs and supporting commentary.

We do not, in every instance, necessarily cross-refer back to each requirement of paragraph 77: in some cases a site's compliance with a particular criterion will go without saying. Instead, we focus on the particular characteristics of each site in order to provide a more holistic overview of it, and of its place in our community.

SITE ASSESSMENTS

Site 1

Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road, currently in use either as informal allotments or as public open space, together with land to the east of the Marsworth Road roundabout (including that roundabout itself).

The predominant part of this site is to the north of Marsworth Road, adjoining The Crescent, and comprises two roughly triangular plots: one, believed to be owned in the main by Aylesbury Vale District Council, in use as informal allotments; and the other, in the ownership of Buckinghamshire County Council, which is used as public open space.

Allotments

The allotments, serving what were originally council properties on The Crescent, were leased by Aylesbury Vale District Council to Pitstone Parish Council from 1983 until 2004 although they had been in use as allotments for many years beforehand. Shortly thereafter the housing functions of AVDC were transferred to Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust and the ownership of certain allotments has, since that time, been clouded in a degree of uncertainty.

AVDC's position since the transfer to VAHT has been that they have no desire to continue managing the site as allotments, but that ownership issues needed to be sorted out as a pre-requisite to any further action. Since 2012 they have expressed to Pitstone Parish Council their desire for the site to remain as allotments or open space. In November 2014 the Deputy Chief Executive of AVDC indicated to Pitstone Parish Council that he intended to bring about a transfer of their ownership, "for you [PPC] to manage as you wish". In March 2015 AVDC reiterated their aspiration that the allotments remain as general open space.

Triangle

The “other” triangle of land was purchased by Buckinghamshire County Council prior to 1984 for highway improvement works (that were never ultimately carried out). Between 1984 and 2005 it was leased to Pitstone Parish Council for use as a recreation and amenity area. Buckinghamshire County Council then declined to renew the lease but informed Pitstone Parish Council that they should “carry on managing it as if a lease were in place” (which they have continued to do). In 2012 it was first mooted by Buckinghamshire County Council that the land was potentially surplus to requirements.

Assessment

Not only do the two parcels of land have real historical and recreational significance both to the residents of The Crescent and to the Pitstone community at large, but the intention of the two landowners has always been – both in the past, and looking to the future – for their current usage to be maintained. Those who live on The Crescent tend the allotments as if their own, whereas Pitstone Parish Council likewise look after the other triangle. This significance is supplemented by a real and demonstrable expectation on the part of those residents, and the community in general, that the land in question will remain as open space.

Visually the combined site also plays a significant part in the ‘look and feel’ of Pitstone. Entering from the west, for example, the narrow hedge-lined vista of Marsworth Road gives way to a sensation of ever-widening open space as one approaches, and then draws alongside, The Crescent. On nearing the roundabout this is further enhanced by the open space of the Recreation Ground on the opposite side of Marsworth Road, and supplemented by the set-back nature of the hedge (and ancillary patch of grass to its foreground) on the eastern side of the roundabout.

Pitstone is ultimately a village dominated by visual superlatives – the most obvious being the views across the windmill field to the Chiltern hills in the near distance – and the importance of this Site 1 cannot in this respect be underestimated. With the impending development of the Pitstone Development Area site, and the aligned desire of Pitstone Parish Council and the two landowners to create a “village green” type ‘heart’ for Pitstone centred on the Recreation Ground, the strategic importance of Site 1 to the collective vision for Pitstone set out in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan is second to none.



Approaching Pitstone along Marsworth Road from the west



The widening vista as one draws level with Site 1



The Triangle: looking west back along Marsworth Road



The Triangle: looking north along Cheddington Road



The Triangle: looking north from Marsworth Road towards The Crescent



The Triangle: looking north-west from (this side of) the roundabout towards The Crescent



*The Triangle: looking south
across Marsworth Road
towards the Recreation Ground*



*The Triangle: looking north-west
across the roundabout
towards The Crescent*



*Various views of the allotments looking west / south-west along The Crescent
(Note the well-kept appearance and good upkeep of all individual plots)*

Site 2

Land connecting Yardley Avenue and Queen Street.

This small and unassuming piece of land ‘punches above its weight’ in terms of importance to the local community and provides a much-needed feeling of open space where it connects two otherwise densely populated areas of housing stock. It adds an air of tranquillity to an otherwise urban feel, providing a relaxed and uncluttered sensation as one approaches the end of Queen Street cul-de-sac from the south; whilst a feeling of openness pervades, and distant yet clear vistas of the Chiltern hills are enjoyed, by those at its northern boundary on Yardley Avenue.



Site 2 as viewed from Queen Street, looking northwards



Site 2 as viewed from Yardley Avenue, looking southwards (Note the views of the Chiltern hills in the background)

Site 3

Woodland and open path eastwards from and including the end of Chequers Lane, towards Brook End.

This path, which in reality runs (or will soon run) from Chequers Lane in the west to the north-western tip of the Rushendon Furlong extension in the east, is perceived as a fundamentally important part of the ring of green infrastructure that the emerging Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan aspires to achieve. It is and has long been an immensely popular route for dog-walkers (and dog-free walkers) and is heavily used, and much valued, by the entire local community.

The designation begins at and includes the eastern tip of Chequers Lane, at the point at which a true rural feel begins. The ‘site’ continues first as a woodland path and then in open countryside, with a small triangular meadow to the south and good views of the nearby Chiltern hills to the east. To the north lies a particularly fine landscape of open arable countryside, which is the subject of separate proposed designations both as an Area of Attractive Landscape and – insofar as the more proximate land is concerned – as Local Green Space (under the auspices of Site 4).



*The far end of Chequers Lane,
looking eastwards*



The end of the tarmac...



...and the start of the footpath 'proper'



*The path emerges into open countryside
(Note the Chiltern hills backdrop)*



*The small triangular meadow
to the south of the path*



*Looking back along the path
with the meadow to the left*

Site 4

Land lying to the north of Site 3 (two separate parcels).

The western parcel begins at the point at which Site 3 emerges into open countryside and is delineated by that footpath to the south, by the line of telegraph poles (which is co-incidental with the extent of farming) to the north, and a hedgerow to the east. It forms an attractive and visually self-contained addition to Site 3, with which it is mutually complementary.

The eastern parcel lies immediately behind that hedgerow and is largely enclosed, and private, in nature. It is however extremely important to Pitstone, forming as it does (on its eastern flank) a boundary with the Parish of Ivinghoe. One of the stated objectives of the emerging PNP is to prevent further coalescence of the two villages and this element of Site 4 fulfils an important role in achieving this.



*Site 4 (western parcel)
as delineated by Site 3 (to the right)
and the telegraph wires (to the left)*



Site 4 (eastern parcel)

Site 5

Land to the east of the Rushendon Furlong extension and to the north of the far corner of the existing / original site.

This site is again largely private in nature but in similar vein is fundamentally important to the concept of Pitstone as a self-contained rural village. It adds an air of tranquillity to the footpath adjoining the brook at the eastern end of Pitstone (proposed for Local Green Site designation as Site 6) as well as, perhaps more importantly, forming a further element of buffer between Pitstone and Ivinghoe. The need for such a demarcation has most recently been recognised in none other than the development proposals for this part of (Ivinghoe's) Ford End Farm, which whilst crossing the brook into Pitstone proposes to utilise all such land as public open space rather than for development and delivery of housing stock.



Site 5 glimpsed through the path along the brook, looking northwards

Site 6

Land adjoining the brook at the eastern end of the village to the north and south of Marsworth Road, which forms an important buffer between Pitstone and Ivinghoe.

The northernmost parcel of Site 6 is currently the eastern end of the Chequers Lane footpath (Site 3), but is proposed for separate designation as that path is shortly anticipated to be 'cleft in two' by the Rushendon Furlong extension for which outline planning permission has recently been granted. It is a tranquil path, important to (and in regular use by) many local people for a variety of purposes, and forms the eastern edge of the aforementioned 'ring of green infrastructure' as well as a very clear boundary between Pitstone village and – across the brook – that of Ivinghoe.

The southern parcel of Site 6 is private in nature but again forms a further element of the important Pitstone-Ivinghoe 'buffer zone' that the emerging PNP seeks to achieve, as well as adding to the very clear rural feel of the two streets (Orchard Way and Green Lane) that it adjoins.



Looking east along the northernmost parcel of Site 6



Looking south, with the brook and Ivinghoe at immediate left



The southernmost parcel of Site 6, from Orchard Way and looking south



Looking north-east across Site 6



Looking north-east across Site 6



Site 6 from the western side of Green Lane, looking south-west

Site 7

Woodland path from Church Road to Windsor Road (Stiring Place / junction with Corfe Road) and adjoining areas of open and green space.

This lengthy and well-used footpath essentially runs along the eastern boundary of the Castlemead development and provides a haven of tranquillity, and good habitat for a wide variety of local wildlife, all along its route. It feeds into Site 8 but also, of its own accord, brings a “feeling of green” to what could otherwise potentially be seen as a heavily-developed area of the village. The manner in which it interconnects many areas of Castlemead and the ‘original’ village adds to both its usefulness and its appeal.



Looking north, at the southern end of the path



Looking north, with Berkeley Close at left



Looking north, with Rockingham Close at left



Emerging in a westerly direction at Stirling Place

Site 8

Large area of public open space to the south-east of the Castlemead development, predominantly to the south and east of Hever Close.

Size can be misleading and this site is very much local in nature in spite of being one of the larger Local Green Space designations proposed by the emerging PNP. It comprises an enclosed meadow area, a network of interlinked woodland paths, and at its very northern end the Hever Close playground. To the south this site gives into Quarry 1, itself too extensive for designation as Local Green Space but already an aspiring SSSI, and proposed for designation as an Area of Attractive Landscape under the PNP itself. As with Quarry 1 itself this entire area is extremely popular with dog-walkers, as well as those travelling on two legs or two wheels, and also displays some of the rich flora that make Quarry 1 so special.



Looking westwards from Church Road



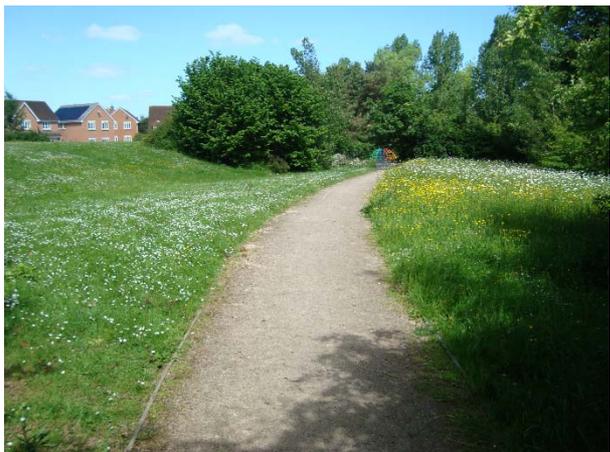
The view from the southern edge of Site 8, south towards Quarry One



Looking south from the same location



Meadow area



Emerging in a northerly direction at Hever Close children's play area



Hever Close play area, looking south

Site 9

Windsor Road (children's play space and adjoining open land).

This particular site has a real “village green” feel and brings a sense of openness and community feel to an otherwise modern housing development. Regularly used by groups of all ages, it is an important aspect of life for those on Castlemead and facilitates a significant amount of recreational enjoyment for those by whom it is used.



Looking southwards



Looking northwards