

Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft) Regulation 19

7. Local Green Space Topic Paper, August 2026

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Local Green Space (LGS) is a designation set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A local or neighbourhood plan can include the designation of an LGS.
- 1.2 During the preparation of the Manchester Local Plan and particularly as a result of the Call for Sites at Regulation 18 stage, a total of 39 requests for Local Green Space designation were received. Three sites were submitted between the initial consultation on Issues and Options in 2020 and the Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan (Autumn 2025). A further 36 sites were submitted via the call for sites request that formed part of the Regulation 18 consultation stage.
- 1.3 This topic paper summarises the policy background and the LGS assessment process that was undertaken and which underpins Policy SI 3: Local Green Space. It refers to the initial preliminary assessment of the 39 sites and signposts to the more detailed subsequent assessment undertaken by consultants. The note also provides a more detailed commentary regarding those sites that have been included for LGS designation in the Manchester Local plan (Publication Draft) and the reason why two sites, although meeting the criteria, have not been included.

2.0 Policy Context

2.1.0 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF 2021)

- 2.1.1 NPPF 2021 allows for the designation of Local Green Space (LGS) and sets out the criteria for such designation. The Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft) has been written to be consistent with PfE which was examined against NPPF 2021.

2.2.0 National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF 2024)

- 2.2.1 NPPF 2024 does not change national policy with regard to the designation of LGS. It does, however, make it clear that whilst the policy for managing development within a LGS should still be consistent with those for Green Belts, this excludes provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land.

2.2.2 Paragraphs 106 to 108 in the NPPF 2024 set out the LGS designation as a way for communities to identify and protect green space of particular importance to them through local and neighbourhood plans. Designating land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. LGS should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Local Plan period.

2.2.3 For the LGS designation to be used the green space must be:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to the local community and holding a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
- Local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

2.3.0 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.3.1 More detail regarding the criteria for assessing LGS is set out in [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

2.3.2 This is also described in paragraph 2.6 of the Local Green Space Assessment (TEP 2026)

2.4.0 Places for Everyone (PfE)

2.4.1 PfE provides the strategic context for the Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft). It does not include any policy which directly relates to the designation of LGS but does include Policy JP-G9: The Green Belt. This states the five Green Belt purposes set out in national policy

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.4.2 It also refers to ways in which Green Belt will be enhanced, such as through improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for our residents and providing the high quality green spaces that will support economic growth.

3.0 Evidence Base

3.1.0 Pre Regulation 18

3.1.1 Three requests for LGS were submitted between the initial consultation on Issues and Options in 2020 and the Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan (Autumn 2025). These were

- Ryebank Road, Chorlton
- The Carlton Club, Whalley Range
- Sackville Gardens, City Centre (Piccadilly)

3.1.2 The opportunity was given for further requests to be submitted at Regulation 18 stage before assessing the individual sites to ensure a consistent approach. A further 36 sites were submitted because of the call for sites exercise.

3.2.0 Regulation 18 Consultation – Summary of Response

3.2.1 Requests to designate a further 36 sites were received during the Regulation 18 consultation. Some of these were explicit requests for an LGS designation, supported with evidence of local significance. Many of the sites, a large number being in the Castlefield area, were more general requests to create, enhance or maintain an area of open space. All the sites received prior to or during Regulation 18 consultation are listed in Appendix A.

3.2.2 A preliminary assessment of the sites was undertaken by the Council to consider which should be assessed in more detail. This considered:

- Whether the request was for a site to be protected/preserved rather than created or enhanced. NPPF describes Local Green Space designation as a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities, rather than a means to create new green space.
- Whether the site was an existing green space capable of having particular local significance, in line with NPPF. Some sites were excluded because they were either not green spaces e.g., they were planters, or would not be able to demonstrate particular local significance e.g. a grass verge
- Whether the site had a defined boundary, e.g. a request to designate the urban forest within Chorlton was excluded as having no defined boundary.

3.2.3 The preliminary assessment concluded that 23 sites would not be assessed in more detail as they did not meet the initial considerations set out in 3.2.2. Appendix B provides further details with respect to the reason(s) why a site was not taken forward for more detailed assessment (n.b. the Appendix includes 22 sites as one site, Roman Gardens, was subsequently included in the detailed assessment as set out below).

3.2.4 Consultants TEP were commissioned to provide an independent review of the preliminary assessment. Following that review, TEP considered any sites that were

considered to be capable of assessment against the set of criteria drawn from the NPPF and PPG.

3.2.5 TEP's review of the preliminary assessment suggested that three of the 23 sites that the Council concluded should not be assessed in detail, should be reconsidered. These were:

- a. Roman Gardens
- b. Medlock/New Elm Road
- c. Castlefield Viaduct

3.2.6 Consultees had requested that these sites be improved or created rather than protected.

3.2.7 It was decided by the Council that the Roman Gardens should be assessed as although the consultee's request for site improvements went beyond the scope of the Local Plan the area of open space was similar in character to the nearby Granary Gardens and Beaufort Street Corner.

3.2.8 The River Medlock Corridor/New Elm Road was considered to be an area in need of improvement with very limited accessibility, rather than an existing green space. It was not therefore included in the short list.

3.2.9 The Castlefield Viaduct is the subject of a National Trust Project aimed at connecting people with urban green spaces. It has so far been visited by over 250,000 people and is considered to have a regional rather than local significance. It was not therefore included in the shortlist.

3.2.10 In summary, out of the total of 39 sites that were submitted, the Council decided that the following 17 sites be shortlisted for LGS assessment:

- Carlton Club;
- Ryebank Road;
- Sackville Gardens;
- Godfrey Ermen Playing Field;
- Lower Medlock;
- Hough End - The Clough;
- Hough End - North Field;
- Hough End - South Field;
- Sandhills Park;
- Old Granada Studios;
- Granary Gardens;
- Pioneer Quay;
- Beaufort Street Corner;
- Roman Gardens;
- Bob's Hill;

- Chorlton Community Garden; and
- St John's Gardens.

4.0 The Methodology

4.1 The methodology used to assess the candidate LGS sites is set out in detail in Chapter 3 of the LGS Assessment, prepared by TEP.

4.2 This comprised three stages based on and in line with the criteria outlined in the NPPF and PPG. The three stages can be summarised as follows:

Stage 1 – to consider whether designating a site as LGS would be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and essential services.

Stage 2 – to consider whether an LGS site would be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

Stage 3 – to consider whether a site was:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to the local community and holding a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
- Local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

4.3 The Stage 1 assessment methodology is detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the TEP report. Proformas have been produced for each site with a brief commentary against the factors and recommendations for which sites should move to the next stage. These proformas are included in Appendix A of the TEP report, and a summary of the Stage 1 Assessment is provided in Chapter 4.

4.4 The Stage 2 methodology is then described in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of the TEP report. Finally, the Stage 3 methodology is set out in paragraphs 3.10 to 3.18.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Stage 1 assessment in Chapter 4 of the TEP report provides details from paragraph 4.5 to 4.23 about the four sites that were identified as having potential to meet development needs, and were subject to assessment, using the methodological tests outlined for Stage 1 assessment, as described at Chapter 3. The four sites assessed were Ryebank Road, Lower Medlock, Sandhills Park and Bob's Hill. Sandhills Park was recommended for further detailed assessment.

5.2 The Stage 2 assessment in Chapter 5 of the TEP report assessed whether the designation of any of the proposed sites as LGS were capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period of the Local Plan. 14 sites were identified to meet this

assessment and were then carried forward to Stage 3. The Stage 2 assessment identified that Ryebank Road, Lower Medlock and Bob's Hill were identified as likely not enduring beyond the end of the plan period if designated as LGS because of the development frameworks proposing them for housing as described above. The Stage 3 assessment in Chapter 6 of the TEP report which set out whether each site met the qualities of a LGS as outlined in Chapter 1. A summary of the Stage 3 Assessment results is outlined in Chapter 6 and the full assessment proformas are included at Appendix B of the TEP report.

5.3 The LGS assessment concluded that the following eight sites met the assessment criteria and were recommended by TEP for designation as LGS:

- Carlton Club;
- Sackville Gardens;
- Hough End - The Clough;
- Hough End - North Field;
- Hough End - South Field;
- Sandhills Park;
- Chorlton Community Garden;
- St John's Garden.

5.4 The Manchester Local plan (Publication Draft) includes six of the recommended eight sites in the new Policy SI 3 Local Green Space; Hough End - South Field and Sandhills Park have not been included. The reasons are set out below.

5.1.0 Sites included in Policy SI 3: Local Green Space

Carlton Club

5.1.1 Carlton Club works as a well-used local community open space, providing important recreational provision in the residential area of Whalley Range. The Open Space Assessment evidence document that underpins Local Plan Policies SI1 and SI 2 has demonstrated a lack of such provision in this area. The site is considered to have both recreational significance and historical significance being located within Whalley Range Conservation Area.

Hough End Clough and North Field

5.1.2 Hough End Clough and the North Field both have recreational, wildlife, beauty and tranquillity value and have strong local support. Red Lion Brook flows to the south of the North Field into Chorlton Brook which winds through the Clough. Part of the site is Ancient Woodland habitat which together with the brook, provide a special contribution to the richness of wildlife and the site's tranquillity. The wider woodland habitat is also identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a Nature Recovery Opportunity Area. Both areas are well used for a range of informal recreational activities.

Sackville Gardens

- 5.1.3 Sackville Gardens is close to a large residential population in the city centre. It is well used by the local community as well as workers and visitors to the city and it has strong local support. Its location within the city centre, which has a more limited number of open spaces, gives it additional recreational significance to the local community. It has important cultural significance in the LGBTQ community. It has significant historical value within the Whitworth St Conservation area contributing to the setting of five adjacent listed buildings and the historic Rochdale Canal.

St John's Gardens

- 5.1.4 St Johns Gardens is close to a large residential population in the city centre, and is well used by the local community, including workers and visitors to the Castlefield area. Its location within the city centre which has a more limited number of open spaces, adds to its recreational value. It also has significant historical value, within the St John Street Conservation area, as the site of the former St John's Church and graveyard.

Chorlton Community Garden

- 5.1.5 Chorlton Community Garden, although very small, provides significant recreational value for the local community. It has local support and fits with the Chorlton Local Infrastructure Framework. It has historical significance, contributing positively to the setting of the adjacent grade II listed Chorlton Library and the grade II listed former temperance billiard hall.

5.2.0 Sites excluded in Policy SI 3: Local Green Space

Hough End South Field

- 5.2.1 This area is actively used for a range of organised sporting facilities. Membership of sporting leagues often crosses administrative boundaries, and this site plays an important role in meeting sporting needs both within Manchester and neighbouring districts. Manchester's population, particularly the younger cohorts, is growing and the importance of ensuring an adequate supply of playing fields and ancillary facilities is recognised in our Playing Pitch Strategy. Whilst Hough End South Field is important to local residents, it also plays a strategic role in the provision of sufficient playing pitches for a much wider population. Given this strategic role, it is considered that an LGS designation would be incompatible with the way the site may need to be more intensively used and managed going forward during the lifetime of the Local Plan. Hough End South Field has, therefore, not been included as a LGS site in the Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft).

Sandhills Park

- 5.2.2 The LGS Assessment affirmed that Sandhills Park clearly has local significance and could become an LGS. However, it lies within a broader area that is expected to see significant change over the lifetime of the Local Plan as set out in the Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft) Policy GL 4 Victoria North. This policy refers to 15,000 new homes being delivered by 2039 across seven new and distinct neighbourhoods. The

scale of development is an important part of delivering the economic growth and housing targets set out in PfE and in more detail in the Local Plan. Policy GL 4 states that Sandhills Park will be retained and improved as an important feature of the green and blue infrastructure network. The inclusion of Sandhills Park in Policy GL 4 provides formal protection to the park and its designation as an LGS is therefore considered unnecessary.

6.0 Integrated Appraisal

- 6.1 The Integrated Appraisal has assessed Policy SI 3 alongside the other Manchester Local Plan (Publication draft) policies with regard to a series of sustainability indicators. Within this broader context, Policy SI 3 Local Green Space is considered to have a largely neutral impact on most indicators with a positive impact on community, health and wellbeing, and climate change.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The methodology used to assess the LGS requests is set out in the LGS Assessment. It follows the criteria described in NPPF and NPPG.
- 7.2 Out of the seventeen sites assessed, eight were recommended for LGS designation. The council is proposing to designate six of the recommended eight sites as LGS. The six sites are listed in the Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft) Policy SI 3 - Local Green Space. Appendix A lists all the candidate LGS sites and the stage that they reached in the LGS assessment.
- 7.3 The reasons for excluding two of the sites recommended by TEP are provided earlier in this Topic Paper, but in summary,
- Hough End – South Field is considered to have an important strategic role which could conflict with an LGS designation;
 - Sandhills Park will benefit from the formal protection of being explicitly referenced within the Manchester Local Plan (Publication Draft) Policy GL 4. Further protection as a designated LGS is not therefore considered necessary.

Appendix A

Table showing the different stages that each candidate LGS passed

Site	Preliminary Assessment	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Proposed as LGS in Local Plan
Carlton Club	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sackville Gardens	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chorlton Community Garden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
St John's Gardens	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hough End North Field	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hough End The clough	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hough End South Field	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sandhills Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Godfrey Ermen Playing Field	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Beaufort Street Corner	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Pioneer Quay	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Granary Gardens	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Roman Gardens	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Old Granada Studios	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Bob's Hill	Yes	No			
Lower Medlock	Yes	No			
Ryebank Road	Yes	No			
Chorlton Urban Forest	No				
Land behind the Hollies, West Didsbury (three slightly different areas with overlapping boundaries)	No				
Community Veg Garden, Liverpool Road	No				
Porcelanosa	No				
Ellesmere Street Planters	No				
Hulme Hall Planters	No				
Blantyre Street Triangle	No				
Chester Road Roundabout	No				
Water Street	No				

Halfords	No				
St Georges Island	No				
Kara Makeup	No				
Medlock/New Elm Road	No				
Castlefield Viaduct	No				
United Utilities	No				
Canal Basin	No				
Saul Hay/Chimney	No				
Area 9/Kenworthy	No				
Arundel Street	No				
Ellesmere Street/Hulme Hall Rd	No				
Upper and Lower Yard at Science and Industry Museum	No				
Street tree planting across all of Castlefield	No				

Appendix B

Table summarising the reasons for not taking forward proposed LGS sites (Stage 1 Assessment).

Site	MCC Comment	Decision whether to assess for LGS	TEP Comments
Chorlton Urban Forest	No site submitted and none available on the internet. The term Chorlton Urban Forest refers to the collection of trees and woodland across Chorlton. A specific site was requested, but no response was received. It would be inappropriate to designate LGS on an area with no specific boundary.	No	Agree an identifiable site should be needed to be assessed as potential LGS. Therefore, the recommendation is to not assess the site.
Land behind the Hollies, west Didsbury (three slightly different areas with overlapping boundaries)	This site is currently Green Belt and therefore subject to green belt planning restrictions. It is within Flood Zone 3. Part of the site (excluding the Britannia Hotel and associated car park) is identified in the GM Local Nature Recovery Network as a nature recovery opportunity area, where action for nature is considered to have the greatest potential. Both the GM LNRS and the draft Manchester Local Plan also require all proposed development across Manchester to	No	As the site is in the Green Belt, it is considered no additional local benefit would be gained by designation as LGS in this case. Therefore, the recommendation is to not assess the site.

Site	MCC Comment	Decision whether to assess for LGS	TEP Comments
	improve biodiversity or mitigate any adverse impacts on biodiversity. No further designation is therefore considered appropriate.		
Cmty Veg Garden, Liverpool Rd	This site consists mainly of steps down to the canal basin with community planters being the only greenery. Whilst the consultee request is that the site be protected, it would be inappropriate to consider planters as Local Green Space.	No	Agree, it would be inappropriate to consider planters as Local Green Space.
Porcelanosa	This is currently hardstanding and a grass verge rather than a community open space. This would not be an appropriate site for LGS. Any redevelopment would require a planning application which would be subject to existing planning policy requirements. The draft Local Plan includes a requirement for tree planting and increased elements of green infrastructure.	No	Agree, it would be inappropriate to consider this hardstanding and grass verge as Local Green Space.
Ellesmere St Planters	This site has now been developed.	No	Site no longer available for consideration.
Hulme Hall planters	Although the category on their web browser is to preserve, it would be inappropriate to class	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.

Site	MCC Comment	Decision whether to assess for LGS	TEP Comments
	planters as LGS. The detailed consideration of the use and retention of planters is beyond the scope of the Local Plan		
Blantyre St Triangle	Request for improvements is an operational matter beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Inappropriate to consider this grass verge along a highway as Local Green Space.
Chester Rd Roundabout	Request for improvements is an operational matter beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Inappropriate to consider this grassed area along a highway as Local Green Space.
Water Street	The request for improvements is an operational matter beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Inappropriate to consider this area along a highway as Local Green Space.
Halfords	The request for improvements is an operational matter beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Inappropriate to consider this grassed area along a highway as Local Green Space.
St Georges Island	Not currently used as green space and therefore inappropriate to designate as LGS.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Kara Makeup	The request for improvements is an operational matter beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Medlock/New Elm Road	This is an operational matter, beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	No	Correct this is an operational matter but consider if the space could be protected as LGS.

Site	MCC Comment	Decision whether to assess for LGS	TEP Comments
Castlefield Viaduct	The points arised here are also raised within the consultees wider comments on the Local Plan and will be addressed in that context. The site is categorised as Improve and Create in the Castlefield Forum submission. Although the space has local benefit, it also has wider than local significance. Assessment as a potential LGS is not therefore considered appropriate.	No	Correct this is an operational matter but consider if the space could be protected as LGS.
United Utilities	Whilst the general principle of greening is supported through the draft Local Plan policies, this site specific request is beyond the scope of the Local Plan. The creation of greenery is not relevant to consideration of LGS.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Canal Basin	Beyond the scope of the Local Plan and not relevant to consideration of LGS.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Saul Hay/Chimney	Beyond the scope of the Local Plan and not relevant to consideration of LGS.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Area 9/Kenworthy	Beyond the scope of the Local Plan and not relevant to consideration of LGS.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.

Site	MCC Comment	Decision whether to assess for LGS	TEP Comments
Arundel Street	This site is already the subject of a planning permission and therefore not appropriate for a LGS assessment. In future subject to the draft Local Plan being adopted, the proposed Trees and Woodlands Policy would require 3 trees to be planted for every 1 removed as part of development proposals within inner wards including Deansgate and Hulme.	No	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Ellesmere Street/Hulme Hall Rd	Beyond the scope of the Local Plan.	N/A	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Upper and Lower Yard at Science and Industry Museum	Comments noted.	N/A	Inappropriate to consider this as Local Green Space.
Street tree planting across all of Castlefield	The proposed Trees and Woodlands Policy requires 3 for 1 trees to be replanted in the inner wards including Deansgate to increase the percentage of tree cover within the central parts of the city where tree cover is lower than average	N/A	Not a proposed site.