

Fontwell Meadows and its Local Green Space Designation

Fontwell Meadows has been categorised by ADC as not meeting the five NPPF criteria and therefore it believes that the site should not be included under Policy VE 1 of the Plan. A site must meet each of the following criteria:

- It is in reasonably close proximity to the community
- The area of land is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance, e.g. natural beauty, historical significance, recreational value, tranquility or richness of wildlife
- The area is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land
- Be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services
- Only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period

It is necessary for this Plan to indicate why it takes the alternative view, that Fontwell Meadows does meet each of the criteria for local green space designation and is thus listed in schedule 4:

1. It immediately abuts the Built Up Area, is overlooked by approximately 15% of the village's houses, and is accessible from close to the village streets' midpoint.
2. While extending to 24.3 acres, part of the reasoning that this is not extensive is that the land is a First Priority Habitat, (see Evidence Base for confirmation reports and correspondence), which of course frequently have to have a certain quantum to succeed in their environmental purpose to support flora and fauna. The size and integrity of the site, previously Eastergate Common, passes down from the time of the Enclosures, and its size is an historic "accident". It was a clearly defined area of common land and was grazed not cultivated, which is why today it supports the special flora and fauna that it does and why it needs a LGS designation. It was common land because of its low cultivatable value and its high grazing value; this derives from a complex geology that gives the land a high water table, supporting at least 21 grass varieties and a rich ecology and biodiversity.
3. Not only is it special to the community (arguably for hundreds of years) but it continues for its grazing to be important to the surrounding professional and amateur equine activity. This is a local feature supporting a significant number of jobs in the local economy, being a £750,000 p.a. business additional to the associated turnovers and employment at Fontwell Park and Goodwood. The land is not put to its optimal use by the current owners.
4. The horseculture of the area is backed up by the special underpass access to the SDNP within 300 yards of the Meadows. The leisure, health and wellbeing of residents as well as visitors are well served by this local specialism. The grazing land and its use is woven into the fabric of the community, economically and socially, and by its contribution to leisure and pleasure, as well by its rich ecology. From less than 200 properties, over 100 residents signed the petition for the land's designation as LGS.
5. The geology of the area puts a significant portion of this land into Flood Protection Zone 1 and 1c, and Portsmouth Water has a borehole just off the site. The springs and sinkholes that pockmark the area testify to the high water table and Portsmouth Water, the Environment Agency and Southern Water have made telling comments regarding the site in

submissions and recommendations to ADC. (Their formal correspondence is in the Evidence Base.) Flooding concerns on the site and further southwards, and the risks to potable water on site, highlight how well this land is suited to LGS designation.

6. Among other rare plants, animals and insects, the site is feeding territory for a so-called “Annexe 2 Red-Listed” protected mammal, for which mediation measures are inappropriate. This particular species of bat, *Barbastelle*, has two roosts in Slindon Woods and has been recorded by amateur enthusiasts on Fontwell Meadows for years. The National Trust is now part-way through its formal study but has already proved this feature; they are echo-recording tagged breeding females, drawn to the nearby ponds supported by the high water table and to the unusual richness of the insect population around the ponds, grasses, trees and hedgerows that result from many years’ lack of cultivation and from the unusual geology.
7. The Meadows’ use and community value is well able to be continued for the foreseeable future, as part of environmental integrity and heritage. It will continue to be a local asset and part of the defining character of Fontwell and it will always bring green space close to the community, which is otherwise surrounded by trunk routes. Dwellings need facilities and amenities, such as this site, to turn them into cohesive and sustainable communities, as identified by the Appeals Inspector when the site was last refused consent.
8. The site cannot be considered for development under the saved policies of the 2003 Local Plan. Development of the site has been refused consent, on appeal, under current saved policies. There has been no public consultation on any ADC development proposals of the site, because there have been none.
9. In her letter of 27th February 1997 refusing consent, the Appeals Inspector said of Fontwell Meadows (App/C3810/A/95/260308) the following:

Para 7.40: “In essence the appeal site provides the only significant open rural setting for the settlement and that would be substantially eroded by the proposal (5.27). I also consider that separation between Fontwell and the block of development at the apex of Fontwell Avenue and Wandleys Lane (2.4) although not a strategic gap would be largely lost. In my opinion the effect of the scheme on the local landscape, its open rural character and pattern of development would be harmful.”

Para 5.27: “The new A27 (T) has created a dominant boundary around the north side, divorcing Fontwell from the countryside beyond. Fontwell Avenue and the Racecourse have a similar effect to the west. The only countryside to give the village context is that of the appeal site. It is not just a visual appreciation. The space is part of the environment in which people live and the presence of the substantial new development and increased activity it would generate would be felt.”
10. Fontwell Meadows was overwhelmingly opposed as a development site by residents in the Survey, for several reasons including its proven archeological potential and its biodiversity. It is therefore this Plan’s policy to resist its development as being contrary to 2003 Local Plan saved policy and strategy, contrary to past planning decisions and also against residents’ expressed wishes. There are no NPPF guidelines that would outweigh those features once the five NPPF criteria listed above are met.
11. It is only under the suspended Local Plan (see the Plan’s Schedule 3) that there is any suggestion of ADC changing these relevant 2003 saved policies. ADC wished to investigate

the land's potential for development at some point in the future, but that idea was built on a provably biased, incorrect and incomplete Sustainability Appraisal, as was shown at the Examination in Public. The Inspector writes unapprovingly of the ADC Sustainability Appraisal in paragraph 9 of his Appendix (see Evidence Base). He quotes the Fontwell case as an example of its failings. Fontwell is not a strategic site under the emerging Local Plan and was only mentioned at all as a possible future site on the basis of this inadequate Sustainability Appraisal.

12. The Inspector has warned all parties not to rely on the Sustainability Appraisal, whatever its reliability, and has recommended that ADC shall be clear about not doing so. (See Evidence Base for Inspector's letter of 16th September 2015 to ADC, ref IDED 14)
13. After having advocated the EiP suspension course of action to Councillors, ADC officers publically advocated the refusal of a LGS designation for Fontwell in this Plan, on the basis of the Sustainability Appraisal and on the basis of emerging Local Plan content. This was notwithstanding that ADC had been recommended to ignore them. This was and remains a clear case of the predetermination against which the Inspector warned ADC because it opens up the probability of legal challenge.
14. The Plan therefore confidently includes Fontwell Meadows in its recommendations for designation.