

Local Green Space Assessment

Keele Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base

September 2021,
Updated November 2025

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to form part of the evidence base that supports the designation of the Local Green Space in the emerging Keele Neighbourhood Plan. It sets out the proposed Local Green Space Designations and summarises the informal engagement with the wider community and landowners that has informed the selection.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 sets out the criteria for designating Local Green Space as follows:

“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 Framework.”

The following Local Green Spaces have been tested against these criteria.

Local Green Space Audit

The Keele Parish lies entirely within the Green belt, Green belts are applied to the fringes of urban areas, in essence, to prevent urban sprawl. They do not

preclude all types of development and do not recognise landscape quality or special community value.

The Local Green Space designations can be made, within Neighbourhood Plans, to offer extra protection to areas of land close to communities and which are of particular value to them. The areas of land may be of historical significance, beauty, recreational value, tranquillity or may be an important habitat.

A significant portion of the Parish lies within Keele University Campus. Large parts of this are protected by its own conservation area and have historic parks and gardens protection. Thus we excluded the conservation area and historic parks and gardens from our review of local green space.

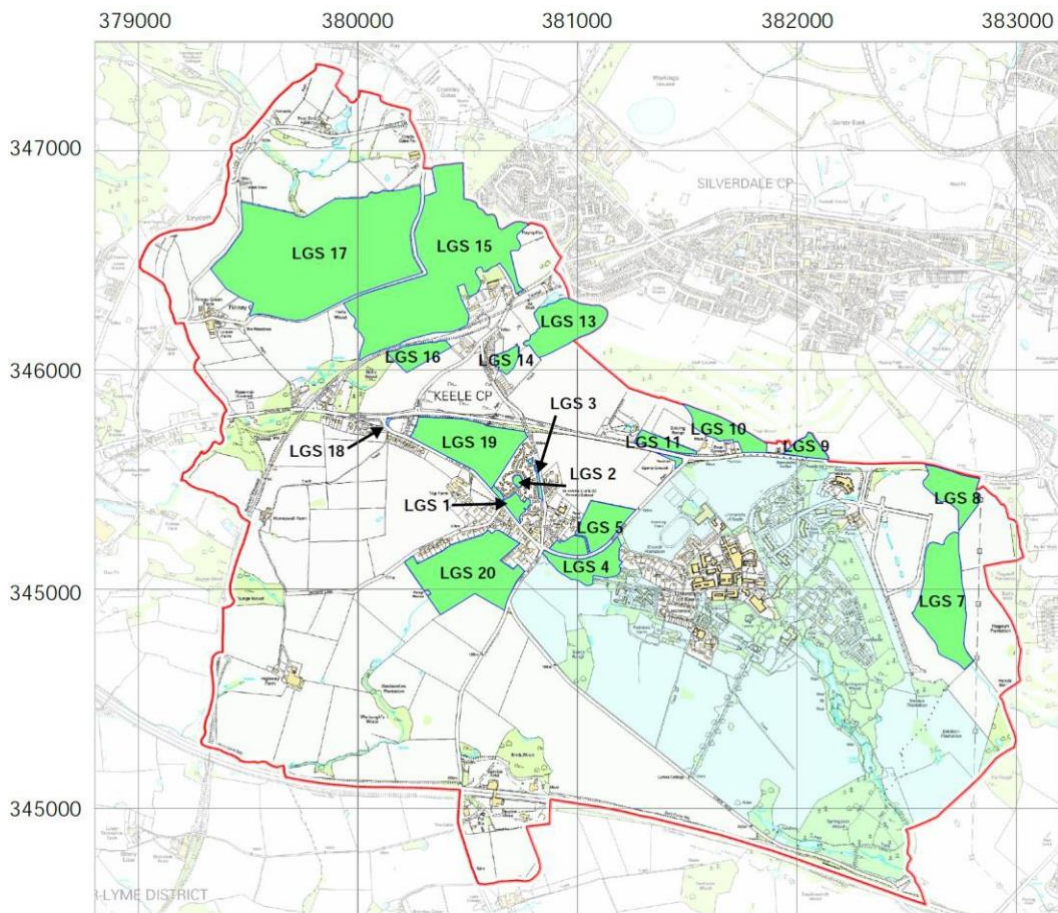
Working with residents and other stakeholders, Keele Parish Council identified the following local green spaces for potential inclusion in the plan:

- LGS 1 Hawthorns Green Shared social space; frame for Hawthorns House
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- LGS 2 Hawthorns play area Play area
- LGS 2 Hawthorns play area Planting - new development
- LGS 3 Quarry Bank spinney Planting - new development
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- LGS 3 Quarry Bank spinney Planting - new development
- LGS 4 Church Plantation and Church Green Shared social space; frame for ST John's Church
- LGS 5 Church Bank View of spire of St John's through trees
- LGS 6 St John's churchyard Conservation area; graveyard; social space
- LGS 7 Barker's Wood Wooded ridge defining views from both Keele and Newcastle directions - outside (but related to) Parks & Gardens CA
- LGS 8 Rosemary Hill Wood Wooded ridge defining views from Newcastle and Silverdale directions; archaeology (previous road systems)
- LGS 9 Newcastle Lodge Wood
- LGS 10 Bogs Wood and fishing ponds Social space
- LGS 11 Roadside spinney Screen for existing (driving range) and any future development
- LGS 12 Templar Monument Village gateway
- LGS 13 Redheath Plantation Wooded ridge defining views from N and W; informal but much used social space
- LGS 14 Quarry Wood Continuation of above
- LGS 15 Haying Wood and Holly Wood Wooded ridge defining northern edge of parish; distinctive landscape feature
- LGS 16 Marl Hole fishing pond Social and recreational space

- LGS 17 Finney Green ridge and clump Westward continuation of LGS 15, culminating in widely visible hilltop clump
- LGS 18 Keele Monument Village gateway
- LGS 19 Knarley Field Open farmland with PRW access (footpath), views, pond
- LGS 20 Village Fields Frame views of village centre CA and church from SW; archaeology (mediaeval field system)

Having consulted with the University we excluded LGS 4, LGS 7, LGS 8 and LGS 9 as they lay within the curtilage of Keele University who were developing their own masterplan in co-operation with the Keele Neighbourhood Plan Group.

The green belt washes over Keele Village and the remaining plan area lies entirely within the green belt.



Informal Consultation

Following the identification of the proposed Local Green Space Keele Parish Council undertook informal consultation on the proposed Local Green Space. In May 2021 a consultation was launched with local stakeholders and the wider public. It ran from May 16th to June 16th and was publicised on the

Neighbourhood Development Website, local notice boards, the NDP Facebook group, by the email bulletin list. Given the situation with the COVID pandemic, we judged face to face sessions were not advisable. In addition landowners were also individually consulted by post.

Following the consultation the Parish Council gave careful consideration to the responses received. We received positive comments regarding LGS1 and 2 and no suggestions for changes. The informal consultation also includes proposed special policy areas. We received no comments from the owners of SPA 4 and the owner of SPA 3 objected to the designation of the land as a special policy area.

The Keele Neighbourhood Plan Group concluded that LGS1 and 2 should be included in the plan to protect existing public access to these spaces and that the Special Policy Areas would not be included in the draft Plan, taking account of the consultation responses, including feedback from the Local Planning Authority.

Local Green Space Descriptions

LGS1: Hawthorns Green, in front of Hawthorns House

This LGS forms the green gateway to the Hawthorns development and is a key green area in the centre of Keele village. It provides an important setting for the locally listed Hawthorns House and is a key part of the Conservation Area.

It is planted with mature trees and memorial trees and has been used by the community for many years. There have been a number of new trees planted as part of the landscaping scheme for the recent housing development. It provides pedestrian access from Highway Lane & Station Road through to the local school, linking up with other walking routes in the village. The mature hedgerow fronting the site to The Village reflects the rural character of the parish. Acting as a defensible boundary and enables it to be of value to recreation & wildlife, as well as providing a tranquil and peaceful environment in the village.

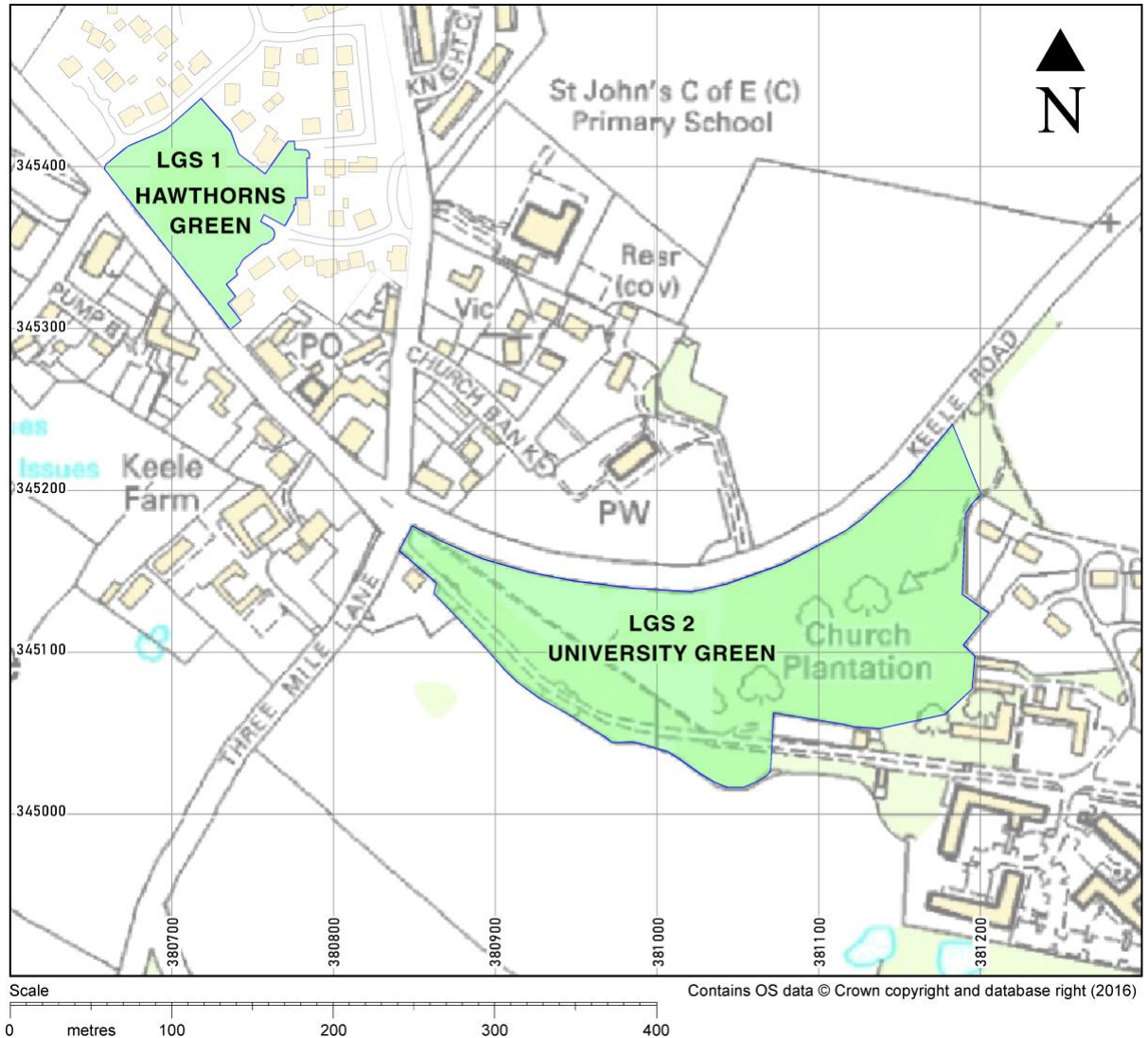
It is demonstrably special to the community. This was made clear through planning representations on the planning application in which the Local Green Space forms part of the development site. In addition the planning inspectorate also recognised its significance and saw fit to protect it from development.

It has historical significance as it fronts the Sneyd estate's Agent's House and would be where the estate workers gathered to collect their weekly wages.

Special Community Value	The space is of special community value, as described above. The mature hedgerow also provides a wildlife corridor, reflecting the character of the rural parish.
Area of space (Ha)	0.82 Hectares
Planning permissions or site allocations	None.
Other Designations	It lies within the Keele Village Conservation Area and is public open space
Not an extensive tract of land	The area is 0.82 Ha and thus it is not an extensive tract of land
Close to the community it serves	It is within easy walking distance of a large proportion of the village population. This makes it a "natural" village green.

Keele Village lacks a formal village green but this is one of two spaces which have served this function informally over recent decades. This peaceful, leafy

space provides the setting for the 18th century Hawthorns House, one of Keele Villages most important buildings. The recent development of housing on the Hawthorns site means that the green is accessible to over 80 new residences as well as the older properties in the village. It will undoubtedly be a key space for residents to meet, walk, relax and spend time together.



LGS2: University Green, Keele Road

This LGS is an important green space in Keele village. It is set with mature and memorial trees and has been used by the community for many years. It is used by both children and adults for recreational activities and is also used extensively for dog walking. A noted feature is its use by the Historia Normannis re-enactment group who can be seen in full 12th century garb during term time. The space is used for informal games of football, cricket, for picnics and for taking the sun with friends.

The main pedestrian access from the village to the University and the historic parks and gardens crosses this site.

The stone wall that provides the site boundary to Keele Road is a key part of the conservation area and acts as a defensible boundary.

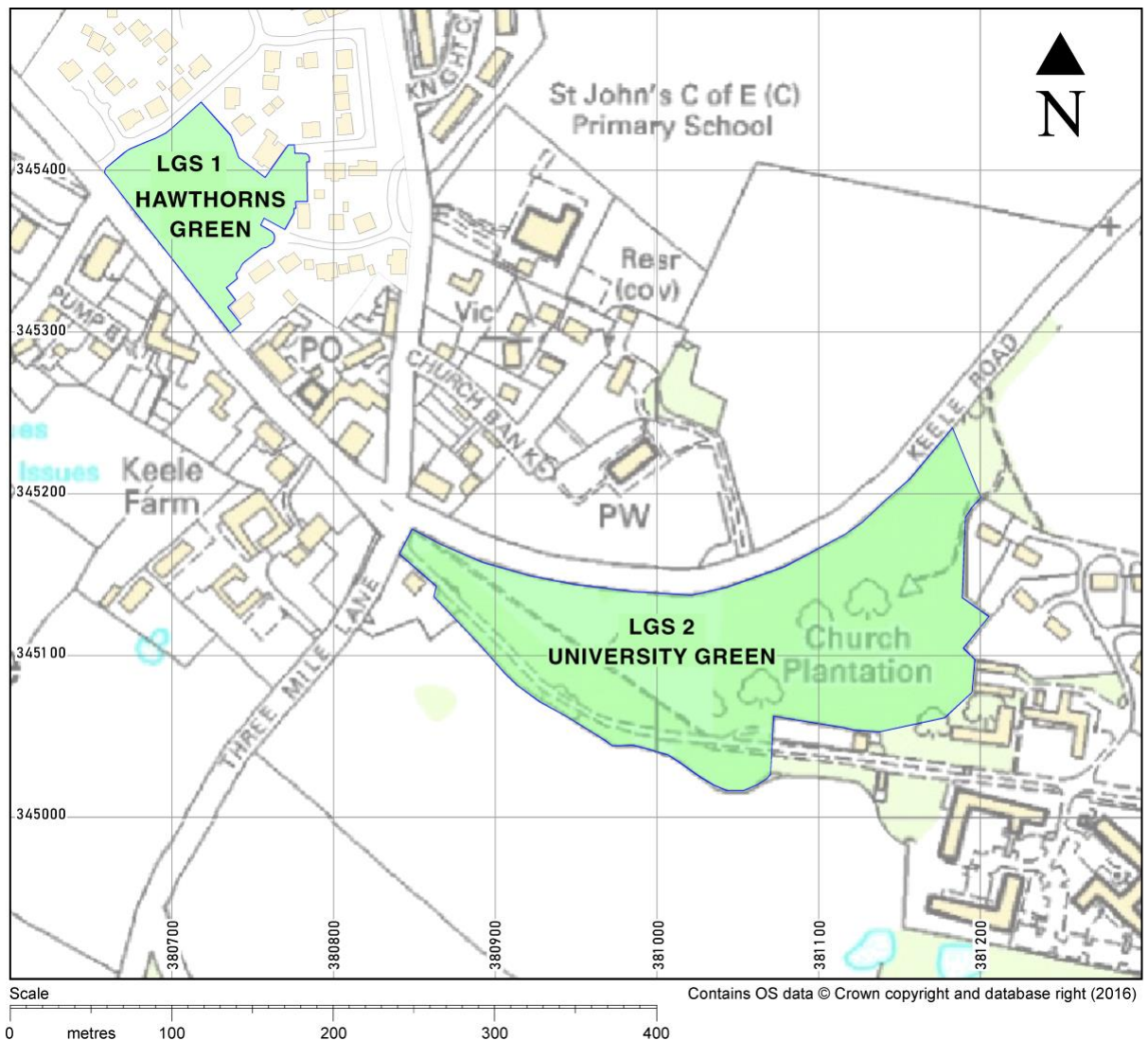
The area forms part of the historic park and garden of the Keele estate and is of historical importance.

The entire green space occupies an area which was originally the central part of the Preceptory of the Knights Templar at Keele. Nineteenth century maps and plans show structures marked as Hall or Old Hall on the site - i.e., the residential unit of the Templar brothers which parallels very precisely other Templar establishments at Temple Balsall (Warwick) and Garway (Herefordshire). Other Templar (farm) structures lie under the eastern end of this green space and in the adjacent woodland and can be identified as earthworks in the landscape. Field walking this archaeological site has thrown up numerous small finds here and in adjacent fields.

Special Community Value	The University Green sits at the opposite end of the village to Hawthorns green and is its complement, providing more open space than Hawthorns Green and the opportunity for informal sports and recreation. It is of historical importance and provides a critical part of the setting of St John's Church (grade 2*) whose presence dominates the view northward from the green. Southward, the green provides views of rolling countryside and the green provides a critical part of the setting for the estate village of Keele. It is widely used by village and campus residents alike for formal and informal recreation: sports, picnics, dog walking and the re-enacted of medieval warfare!
Area of space (Ha)	3.52
Planning permissions or site allocations	None.

Other Designations	Part of the Keele Village Conservation Area
Not an extensive tract of land	At 3.52 Ha, the green cannot be regarded as an extensive tract of land
Close to the community it serves	It is within 10 mins walking distance of all properties in the village and university campus.

This green space has an open setting and significant areas of unplanted grass which is maintained by the University. Although it remains the property of the University, they are happy for the public to use the space provided they follow the rules clearly posted at the entrance. It is part of the setting of the estate village and its grade 2* listed church and offers attractive views in all directions. It is widely used by village and campus communities for rest and recreation.



Conclusions

Considering each Local Green Space against the NPPF December 2024, each space positively meets the criteria. These Local Green Space should be included in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for designation.