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# Stewkley Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019 - 2039

## Key Open and Green Spaces Report

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## 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared for the purposes of, and to accompany, the Submission version of the Stewkley Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This report sets out the conclusions of Stewkley Parish Council regarding sites to be designated as Local Green Spaces and the reasons for their inclusion.

## 2. National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 For a site to qualify for designation as a Local Green Space, it must meet each of the following criteria, which are set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.2 These require 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. Neither “local in character” nor “an extensive tract of land” are defined. (The Draft National Planning Practice Guidance states, “There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgement will inevitably be needed”)

## 3. Methodology

3.1 In the early stages of the Neighbourhood Plan’s preparation the Parish Council established a steering group to oversee its development. The steering group was responsible for collating the evidence required to inform the plan, developing the content and consulting with the community. Nine Working Groups were formed to carry out investigations, gather evidence, consult with local people and begin to identify policies. The working groups covered the following themes:

Amenities	Planning and Landscape	Business
Conservation and Heritage	Schooling	Transport and Infrastructure
Elderly and Disabled	Sports and Recreation	Youth

The Planning and Landscape Group sought to address the fundamental question, “What green spaces matter most to our community and why and undertook a Green Infrastructure Audit to capture in detail Stewkley’s key open spaces, which add to its unique character. These include a series of heritage, recreational green spaces, non-recreational green spaces and heritage spaces as set out in the tables under Sections 4 – 6 below.

## 4. Heritage

Stewkley has a rich and varied history. The Heritage sites are important as a reminder of the key areas that have made the Parish what it is today. It is therefore important that these sites remain substantially in their current state.

Name	Description	Details
Littlecote Medieval village	Listed as a vill in the Domesday survey of 1086. The site is represented by an area of well-defined earthworks in which evidence for the nature of the settlement will be preserved.	Significant as a location of the previous village with only the outline of house locations remaining.
Stewkley War Memorial	The Memorial and garden surrounding on its 'traffic island' lists all those Stewkley residents that have fallen in the two world wars.	At a key node in the village dividing HIGH STREET SOUTH and HNN and linking to Soulbury. It is the focus of Remembrance Day every year.
St Michael's (1150AD) Church + Churchyard	Grade I Listed St Michael's Church is a remarkable and internationally renowned example of Romanesque ecclesiastical architecture, described by Sir Nicholas Pevsner (1994) <i>The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire</i> , as "....possibly the finest example of original Norman ecclesiastical architecture in England." It stands, little altered, in its churchyard at the centre of the village, and in in the heart of the Stewkley's Conservation Area.	The churchyard is key to this 'nationally 'important building. With many fine examples of mature trees, it houses the graves of many of the existing community's ancestors including those that have fallen in the two world wars. It creates a beautiful, tranquil setting that is well maintained by the church community. Its importance means that it should remain intact without alteration.
Moated Earthworks	Moated earthworks to the west of St Michael's church, off Tythe Gardens.	A horseshoe moat surrounding a central island some 15 metres across. Recent archaeological surveys highlighted no remains of a building in the centre. A key point of this landmark is its relationship with St Michael's church and the spaces between them. Its setting and surroundings are therefore of prime importance.
Warren Farm	A site of Special Scientific interest. Described by <a href="#">Natural England</a> as "vital to our understanding of the late Jurassic environments, stratigraphy and palaeogeography"	One of the key sites that produced (now redundant) the Stewkley red brick that adorns many building in the village.
Drover's Way	Used to drive cattle & sheep from Wales to London and south east of England.	Used to drive cattle & sheep from Wales to London and south east of England.
Airport Monument	The airport monument is located a mile outside the village on the Dunton Road at the site called 'The Spinney' (see recreational spaces below).	The Spinney is the location of the memorial to the Community 'battle' to prevent London's fourth airport being located in Stewkley.

## 5. Recreational Green Spaces

Name	Description/Location	Details
Recreation Ground	<p>Approx. 3 ha of multi-use grassed area located off Soulbury Road.</p> <p>The site comprises an open grass area marked out for football and cricket, with children's play area, adult fitness equipment, tennis courts, all-weather space, outdoor toilets and a brick built pavilion.</p>	<p>A key recreational, sporting space for the village providing a hub for football, tennis, cricket practice, games and tournaments.</p> <p>It also provides a key space for the annual music festival and organised barbecues. It is used daily for walking, running, dog walking and general recreation.</p>
Football Field	<p>Approx. 2 ha, adjacent to the recreation ground, the field also contains storage sheds for equipment and machinery.</p>	<p>This field was purchased by the Stewkley Recreation Association to meet the increased demand for pitches.</p>
Stewkley Wildlife Reserve	<p>Approx. 2.6 ha -adjacent to the football field in the recreation ground, the reserve is contained in three small meadows. Two were historically allotments known locally as Church furlong, and the other was known as 'The Jackdaw' field.</p>	<p>These 3 fields are a valuable wildlife resource and are some of the only remaining unimproved meadows in the parish. Two of the fields were designated as Local Wildlife Sites in 2005.</p>
Griffin Field green space	<p>A green area of approx. 0.1 ha on the boundary between Griffin Field and the neighbouring Manor Road development.</p>	<p>The area is laid to lawn with trees and is used as a recreational area by residents and play area for children.</p>
St Michael's School playing fields	<p>Approx. 0.75 ha grassed playing fields providing play and sports facilities for the local Primary School.</p>	<p>A village fair has been held here on a number of occasions.</p>
Airport Monument and Spinney	<p>Approx. 2.2 ha of managed woodland, the Spinney is divided into three "petals" that straddle the junction of roads to Dunton and Cublington.</p>	<p>The Monument Petal has been fully restored; the westerly Kingsbridge Petal has been largely left to nature; the northern Penton Farm Petal is providing an ideal location for Stewkley Explorer Scouts' countryside activities. A variety of Stewkley groups can regularly utilise the wonderful space for activities, adventures and learning.</p>
Allotments	<p>Approx. 0.65 ha site on Soulbury Road opposite Walducks Farm.</p>	<p>The Diocese of Oxford owns and manages the allotments and has given a long term commitment to maintaining the site.</p>

## 6. Non- Recreational Green Spaces

Name	Description	Details
Parish Council Lawn Cemetery	Approx. 0.27 ha landscaped area adjacent to St. Michael's Church and the Recreation Ground.	St Michael's Churchyard is now 'full' and this piece of land is the location for all new burials for the village. A further plot within the recreation ground between the lawn cemetery and the car park has been identified to meet future capacity. This will reduce the space available for general recreation.
Fishweir	Approx. 0.1 ha green adjacent to Chapel Square and the school.	This green space has a number of mature trees.
Stockall Tiger Island	A small green space that fronts onto HIGH STREET NORTH with an access road to the houses behind.	This green space has a number of mature trees.
Sycamore Close	A small green space in front of homes. A 0.1 ha green space between Scyamore Close gardens and HSN gardens	Whilst not formally recreational space, this green provides a play area for local children.
Grass verges and islands	A number of grassed areas exist between the pavement and the road and in areas around junctions.	These well maintained grass areas give character to the village and are occasionally planted with small trees, shrubs and bushes.

## 7. Criteria for Inclusion

To arrive at our interpretation of the criteria for the proposals for Local Green Spaces listed in the Neighbourhood Plan, the following have been taken into consideration:

### Features Specific to Stewkley:

#### 7.1 Landscape

The landscape character of Stewkley, although evolved over centuries, has little changed.

#### 7.2 Overall Character and Qualities:

A linear wooded ridge, surrounded by sky dominated, open field landscape, patterned by regular fields.

#### 7.3 Characteristic features:

- Dominant sky and uninterrupted, far reaching views
- Level plateau farmland becoming gently sloping and undulating clay lowland
- Well defined regular pattern of small to medium sized open fields radiating 90 degrees to ridge and linear village
- Fields – medieval origin – some 'ridge and furrow' remain, 'hedge and ditch' with hedgerow trees
- Hedge and ditch lined straight roads
- Mixed arable and permanent pasture of working farms

#### 7.4 Maps of c1770, c1913 and c2001 show the rural landscape character of Stewkley little changed.

- Countryside remains very close to the spine of the village
- Settlement confined to the ridge, save small clusters or cul-de-sacs set 90 degrees to the main thoroughfare
- Patterns of development small scale
- Households abut directly onto the surrounding farmland
- Views down short lanes/streets and distinct gaps between buildings bring the countryside INTO the village and keep the attachment. NB. This is evident even in recent developments of Dove Street, Orkney Close and Walducks Close
- Topography, aspect and location enabling far reaching uninterrupted rural views
- Direct, quick, easy pedestrian access into the countryside

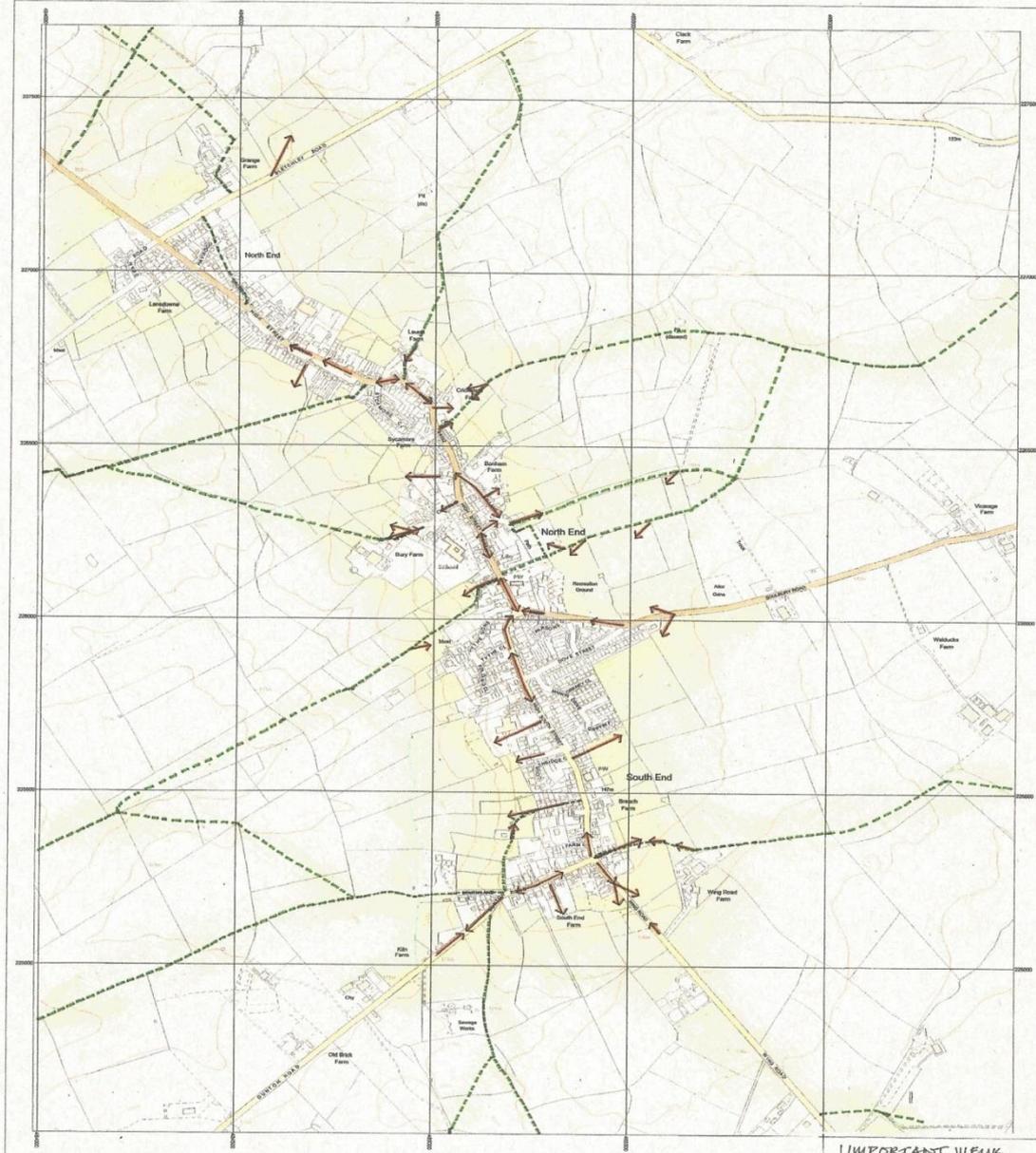
#### 7.5 Rights of Way

For a village, Stewkley has an unusual abundance of footpaths and permissive paths. There are 35 definitive public rights of way in the Parish and BCC created a series of permissive paths on the Kingsbridge Estate which is now owned privately. There is a CC Circular Walk based on Stewkley, and the Cross Bucks Way also passes through the Parish. There is also a Centenary Walk. No dwellings are more than a few hundred meters from the network.

# Stewkley Parish Important Views and Footpaths Map

NATIONAL  
MAP CENTRE

1:10,000



-  IMPORTANT VIEWS
-  FOOTPATHS

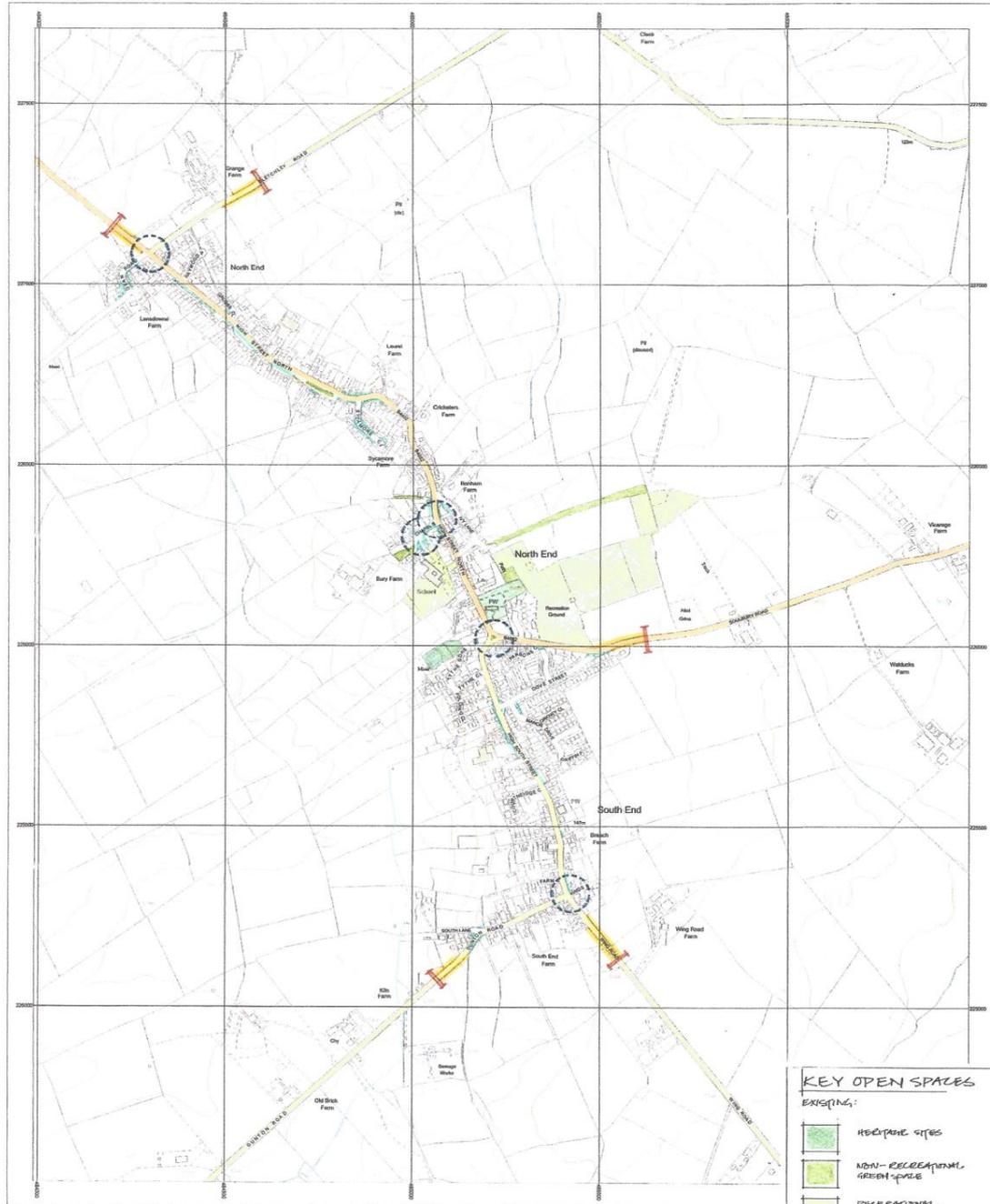
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# Stewkley Parish Key Open and Green Spaces Map

NATIONAL MAP CENTRE

1:10,000



Stewkley

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**KEY OPEN SPACES**

**EXISTING:**

- HEDGEROW SITES
- NON-RECREATIONAL GREEN SPACE
- RECREATIONAL GREEN SPACE
- LOCAL GREEN SPACE i.e. locally important in character
- 

**PROPOSED:**

- LOCAL GREEN SPACE ANTENNAE
- HUBS

## 8. Policy and Precedence

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGst) sets a range of accessibility standards for natural sites and areas within easy reach of peoples' homes. In particular, ANGst recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural green space of at least 2 hectares (5 acres) in size, no more than 300 metres (325 yards or 5 minutes' walk) from their home. These criteria also form part of the framework contained in the Vale of Aylesbury Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011-16). See Appendix 1.

## 9. Inclusion Summary

Whilst many sites were originally considered for potential designation as Local Green Spaces, those proposed for designation fell into one (or more) of three distinct categories:

- a) Pockets of land within Stewkley's "built environment" which are considered most vital to providing some tranquillity, and which help to create a more 'open' feel within the village;
- b) Sites used for sports and other recreational activities and/or of specific heritage value; and/or
- c) Sites on the immediate periphery of the Stewkley Settlement Boundary offering public access (footpaths) which are demonstrably special to the local community and are used for local leisure and dog walking, many having historical, landscape or wildlife importance.

## 10. Local Green Space Designation

The following Local Green Space designations, illustrated on the map below, are hereby proposed:

The Recreation Ground	Stewkley Parish Council
The Football Field (adjacent to the Recreation Ground)	Stewkley Recreation Ground Association
Stewkley Wildlife Reserve	Stewkley Parish Council
Griffin Field Green Space	Hightown Housing Association
Airport Monument and Spinney	Bucks County Council
Parish Council Lawn Cemetery	Stewkley Parish Council
Fishweir Green Space	Bucks County Council
Stockall Tiger Island	Aylesbury District Council
Sycamore Close Green Space	Aylesbury District Council
St. Michael's Churchyard	Diocese of Oxford

## Site Assessment Summary (with reference to NPPF Paragraph 77)

<b>Local Green Space Designation</b>	<b>Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance</b>	<b>Local in character, and is not an extensive tract of land.</b>
The Recreation Ground	Yes – at the geographical centre of the village of Stewkley	A Parish questionnaire established the recreation ground as most valued asset to the community	Yes – 3 ha site with clearly defined hedge boundary
The Football Field (adjacent to the Recreation Ground)	Yes – at the geographical centre of the village of Stewkley	Regularly used at weekends by adult and junior teams	Yes – 3 ha site adjacent to the recreation ground
Stewkley Wildlife Reserve	Yes – a short walk from the recreation ground	These 3 fields are a valuable wildlife resource and are some of the only remaining unimproved meadows in the parish, designated as Local Wildlife Sites in 2005.	Yes - 2.6 ha site adjacent to the football field
Griffin Field Green Space	Yes – adjacent to homes in the south of the village of Stewkley	Important, safe environment for local children to play	Yes - 0.1 ha
Airport Monument and Spinney	Yes – at the western edge of Stewkley Parish with good access	Stewkley groups regularly utilise the wonderful space for activities, adventures and learning.	Yes - 2.2 ha of managed woodland
Parish Council Lawn Cemetery	Yes – at the geographical centre of the village of Stewkley	Burial place for the parish – a peaceful location for residents to visit	Yes - 0.27 ha - clearly defined hedge boundary
Fishweir Green Space	Yes – at the geographical centre of the village of Stewkley	A pleasant and peaceful space bordering sheltered housing	Yes 0.1 ha
Stockall Tiger Island	Yes – adjacent to homes in the north of the village of Stewkley	An important green space providing a natural break between homes and highway	Yes 0.1 ha
Sycamore Close Green Space	Yes – adjacent to homes in the north of the village of Stewkley	Important, safe environment for local children to play	Yes 0.2 ha
St. Michael's Churchyard	Yes – at the geographical centre of the village of Stewkley	Historical location for the 11 <sup>th</sup> Century St. Michael's Church containing ancient graves and monuments. A peaceful location for parishioners to visit.	Yes 0.5 ha – clearly defined boundary

## 11. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

### 11.1 New Development should:

- Uphold, enhance and conserve the existing rural landscape character
- Maintain the quality currently enjoyed by the community
- Ensure new residents enjoy the same quality
- Concur with the Stewkley settlement pattern
- Design and site layout to increase householders interaction and enjoyment of their countryside

### 11.2 Aims

- To use 'Pause Points' to highlight and encourage even more residents to use the footpaths, recreation ground and other facilities even more frequently
- To increase safe pedestrian movement in and around the Parish
- To increase awareness and interest in the Nature Reserve
- To develop further some existing, varying-sized, circular routes. e.g. The Spinney Walk
- To possibly develop cycle routes within the footpath network
- To improve the entrance and increase access to the recreation ground and play areas
- To encourage and increase outdoor activity groups – walking, running, cycling, fitness, nature watch etc.

### 11.3 Policies:

#### Policy NE1: Maintaining Key Open Spaces

Development proposals which result in the loss of the designated key open will not be permitted unless they are for community facilities (policy ASR2) where the loss of the open space is significantly outweighed by the community benefit.

Proposals adjacent to these key open spaces must demonstrate how their proposal has been integrated into the open space and has included measures for enhancement of the open space commensurate with the size and impact of the development.

#### Policy NE2: Maintain the Connection between the Village and its Surrounding Countryside.

Proposals to provide and improve access to existing public open space through a well maintained network of footpaths, cycle paths and bridle ways and the improvement and enhancement of public rights of way will be supported.

Any proposal will only be permitted, provided it does not negatively impact on the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points. Those Important distinctive views have been defined on the Important Views and Footpaths Map.

### 11.4 Recommendations (Community Action Projects):

#### Gateways to Village

Create physical 'symbols' to identify the entrance to the village to signify a change in speed for vehicles as shown on the 'Key Open Spaces' Map.

#### Local 'Hubs'

Celebrate the key nodal/road junctions in the village with enhanced landscape planting, street texture change (raised table/cobbles) and pedestrian crossings as shown on the 'Key Open Spaces' Map.

The village of Stewkley is one of the longest villages in the country. It does not have a traditional 'heart space' of a village green due to its formation from four key house 'estates' along the main road through. This proposal aims to celebrate the

key nodal/ road junctions in the village whilst enhancing the character of the village. It also provides a signal to vehicles passing through that they have entered a village where pedestrians are crossing and speed restrictions apply

- Dunton Road/ Wing Rd/ HIGH STREET SOUTH – A key entrance hub for the village
- War Memorial/ St Michaels Church – The faith/ remembrance hub
- The Swan/ Village Hall – The key heart space of the village. A key social hub of the village
- Bletchley Rd/ Mursley Rd/ HSN - A key entrance hub for the village

#### Recreation Ground

A popular recreational, sporting and dog walking hub for the village itself. Key enhancements proposed :-

- Upgraded toilet facilities
- Upgraded children's play equipment
- All-weather pitch
- A further cricket practice net
- A pathway to link the 2 car parks thereby enabling 'all year around' community access for parking when using the Scout Hut or a safe pathway for parking for St Michael's School pick-up/ Drop-off

## Appendix 1 - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (Natural England, 2003) is considered as a national benchmark and is accepted as forming part of government guidance on strategic greenspace provision and having the best fit to green infrastructure (GI) planning and assessment. The standard emphasizes the importance of communities in towns and cities having easy access to different sizes of natural and semi-natural greenspaces close to where they live and provides two measures of analysis based on scale (sizes of green space provision) and catchment (representing the zone of influence of a provision and the distance that people are prepared to travel). The ANGSt model states:

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size, and
- that there should be least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of people's homes
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of people's homes
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of people's homes
- there should be 1.4ha per 1000 population as incidental open space
- there should be 2.4ha per 1000 population as major open space

Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to ensure that high quality GI is delivered which is accessible, attractive for residents and visitors to the Vale which conserves and enhances the Vale's special natural and historic environment, its wildlife and its landscape.

The nine strategic aims are

1. To achieve a shared vision for GI across Aylesbury Vale. It builds upon the opportunities and constraints identified in the Buckinghamshire GI Strategy and the principles established in the Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and South Midland (Environment and Quality of Life, 2005). It seeks to encourage the public, private and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to direct improvements to existing GI and in the design of new GI, including sites that are adjacent to and cross the boundaries of the District.
2. To address the GI deficit in Aylesbury Vale through underlining the need for standards for provision in new and existing communities, providing quality of life benefits to residents and visitors and underpinning the concept of sustainability.
3. To set out the principles applied to all new GI and to existing sites, to deliver high quality design and management.
4. To guide the provision of GI to achieve high quality multi-functional sites and maximising the implementation of the seven key functions.
5. To ensure that GI is properly considered in the strategic and detailed planning of growth through setting in place principles for its provision.
6. To secure community engagement and inspire a sense of place, ensuring that the needs and wishes of local people are taken into account in the design, enhancement and management of sites.
7. To provide a framework for investment in GI and to guide priority setting for the provision of new GI and the enhancement of existing sites.
8. To raise the profile of GI and highlight its value to developers, Councillors, community organisations, statutory bodies, the farming community, residents and visitors.
9. To encourage GI providers to measure public satisfaction and determine future need by quality audits and application of District-wide standards to their provision.