

Lack of Local Green Space designation in Macclesfield

King's School Historic Cricket Pitch, a case example?

Representation 1255693

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Green/open space protection (Policy REC 1)

172. Is Policy REC 1 justified, effective and consistent with the LPS and national policy in protecting open space in Cheshire East of recreational or amenity value? In particular:

- a) Is the inclusion of term 'green space' clear and unambiguous, is it clearly defined in the SADPD and is it consistent with national policy for the protection of open space?
- b) Is the methodology used to define open spaces for protection robust and are the areas of land identified on the Policies Map as protected open space justified, based on proportionate evidence?

SADPD process is currently unsound. There is no evidence of CEC considering Local Green Space designation, as defined in sections 101–103 of NPPF, for any site in Cheshire East even though there is a need for more open space. CEC use an ambiguous designation of 'protected open space' which suggests protection from residential development. The example of King's School in Macclesfield show this is not the case. Macclesfield Town Council has decided not to have a Neighbourhood Plan. To make the SADPD sound, we suggest Cheshire East review all the protected open space in Macclesfield and consider which would meet Local Green Space designation. Also we consider that this site should have been submitted as a potential site to the SADPD so that there could have been a public consultation on its change of land use.

No Local Green Space designations in SADPD

CEC SADPD does not currently propose any land designation as Local Green Space (LGS) as defined by NPPF paragraphs 101–103. The SADPD document mentions LGS twice, in relation to REC1 policy.

Local green spaces can also be designated in neighbourhood plans Section 11.2

Made neighbourhood plans are part of the development plan and can show areas of valuable green/open space plus local green spaces. Section 11.3

Not all areas of CEC will have neighbourhood plans. Macclesfield Town Council has specifically voted against having a neighbourhood plan.

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. NPPF 101

Since Local Green space can only be designated during local and neighbourhood plans, CEC should then be responsible for designation of Local Green Spaces in Macclesfield during the SADPD process. The SADPD process has not considered reasonable alternatives to ‘protected open space’ designation and specifically has not considered Local Green Space for sites in Macclesfield. To the average member of the public ‘protected open space’ would suggest protection from residential development. We think the use of term ‘protected’ is misleading and so renders the public consultation unsound. With ‘protected’ open space the decision making is still tilted towards residential development, as evidenced by King’s School playing fields on Westminster Road that are currently being developed despite being designated ‘protected open space’ in the draft SADPD.

Macclesfield needs more open space

The evidence base for the open space strategy has been refreshed. The general finding is from the open space assessment is that provision is poorer in the central and south western areas of Macclesfield. There are also specific shortages of playing fields and allotments.

Specific recommendations of SADPD Green Space strategy update August 2020 (ED59) include:

- Address the need for additional pitch facilities in Macclesfield (see Playing Pitch Strategy)

- Investigate funding mechanisms to improve the quality of outdoor sports provision and associated facilities
- Increase the provision of amenity green space in the high-density residential areas of Macclesfield
- Address the need for additional allotment facilities and facilitate other community food production.

King's school historic cricket pitch as Local Green Space.

We believe the King's School historic cricket pitch on Cumberland Street should be designated as Local Green Space (LGS) as it is demonstrably special to the local community for its beauty and historic significance. To visitors to Macclesfield it provides an iconic view across an attractive green space bounded by a historic stone wall and featuring a number of majestic, listed buildings which can currently be viewed from all angles. It also has potential to provide a space of tranquillity in the busy town centre or to meet need for recreational sports pitches.

The cricket pitch at King's School needs to be designated as Local Green space as it is close to the Macclesfield community it serves and it is local in character and not an extensive tract of land. It has recently been scrutinized during the planning application and the CEC planning officer report to board explicitly references this site's historic significance:

The openness and informality of the main open space is a strong reflection of its former use as a cricket pitch and maintains open views of the key heritage assets.
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The setting of the assets at Kings are interrelated and contribute to one another, including that of the Alms houses to the south of Cumberland Street. The principal view of the heritage assets is that from the site entrance toward the north. But the Kings setting is more than just this view; it is also about atmosphere within the site. The openness within the front part of the site contributes greatly to this, albeit it is not a formal or designed space. It epitomises King's. Views out from buildings across the space and from the cricket pitch toward the hills to the east of the town also contribute toward the setting of the assets, creating a visual connection to the wider landscape
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As part of the planning application, an external heritage report by Hinchcliffe Heritage was produced and also explains the historic significance of the site.

The school buildings and its site have evidential, historic and communal value, as tangible evidence of several phases in the evolution of an historic school in Macclesfield, which was originally founded as a chantry school in 1502 by Sir John Percyvale. He was Master of the Guild of Merchant Taylors and Lord Mayor of London in 1498 and the foundation of the school bears witness to the historic tradition of charitable schools in Britain, which were founded by successful merchants. It has particular significance as it was the first of several schools in the country to be founded by a member of the Guild of Merchant Taylors.

The school has special communal value in the collective memory of its former pupils, many of whom still see it on a day to day basis, due to its prominent location on one of the main circulation routes through the town. The school buildings are grouped together along the N side of the site, creating a parade of buildings, each with a central focal point of a spire, cupola or clock tower. The open space of the cricket pitch provides a generous setting in front of the buildings and enables views of them from the town centre, predominantly focussed on the Main School Building of 1910.

Heritage Significance – Medium

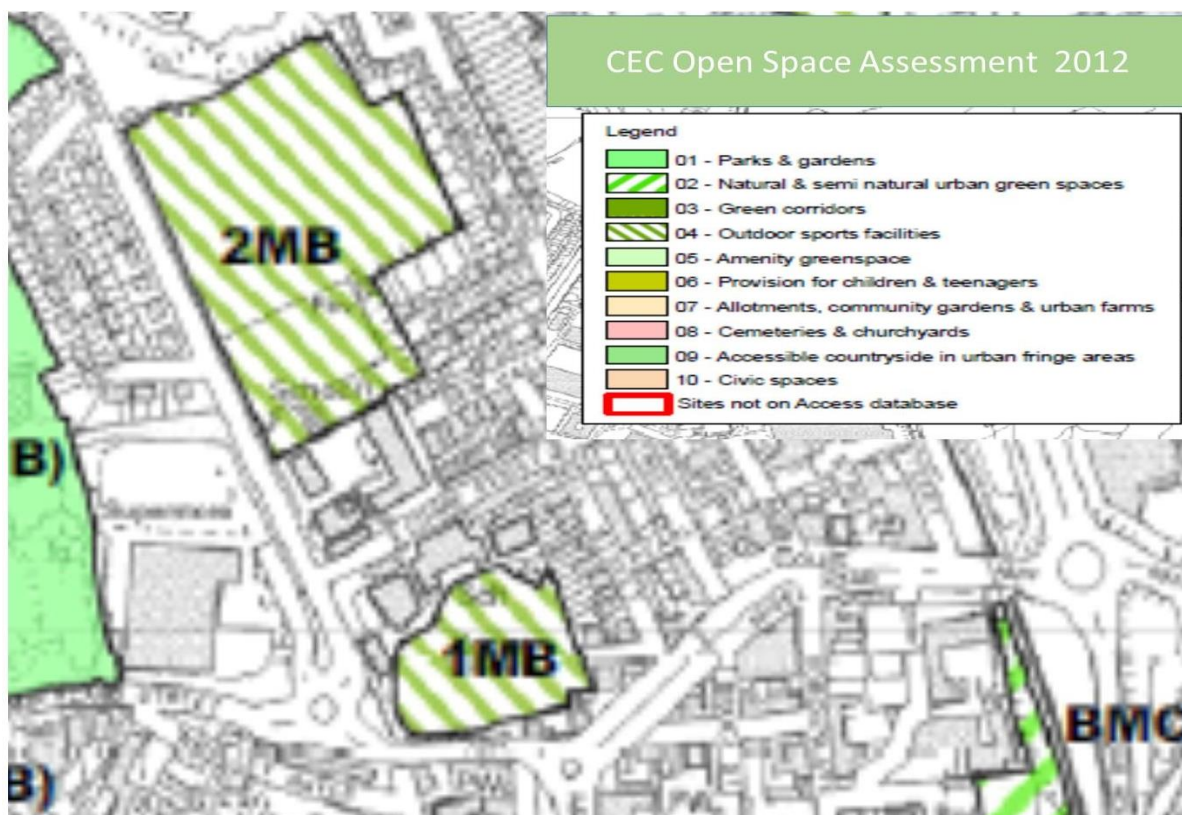
Heritage Report Hinchcliffe Heritage for GVA How Planning 28th February 2019

Macclesfield Civic Society noted that the site is *prominent and distinctive with a range of building types and styles extant set within landscaped grounds*. In relation to the war memorial cricket pavilion they comment that its possible demolition and building on the cricket pitch will have issues of *sentiment and symbolism (and may be deeply felt by residents of the town)*

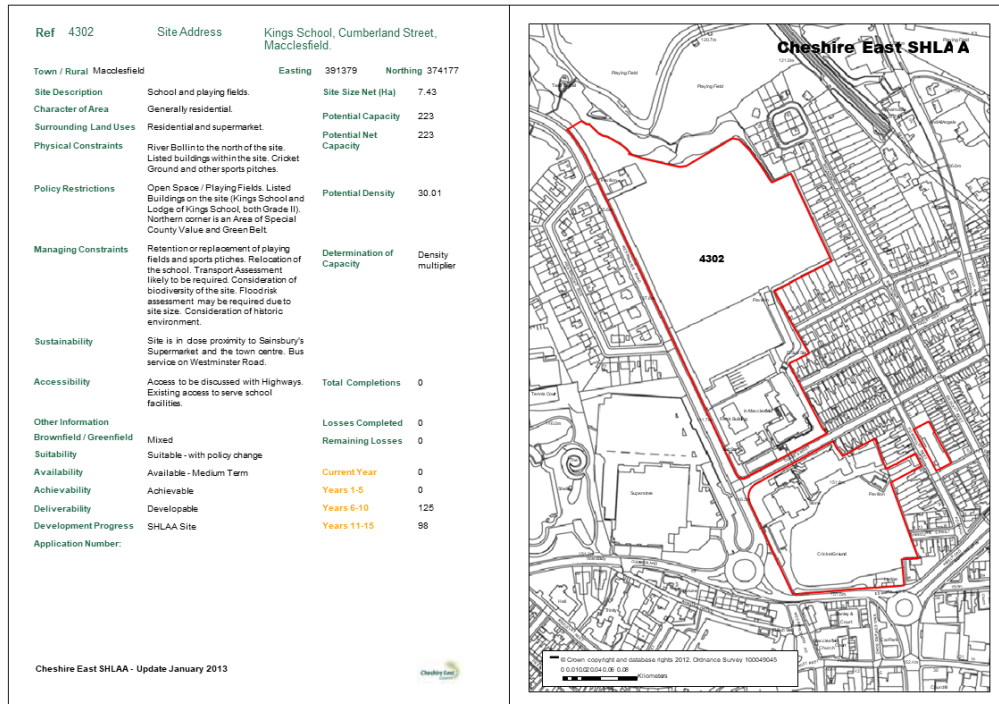
King's School Historic Cricket Pitch: a case study

In summer 2020 the King's School moved to a new build in Prestbury. The old school sites in central Macclesfield are being redeveloped.

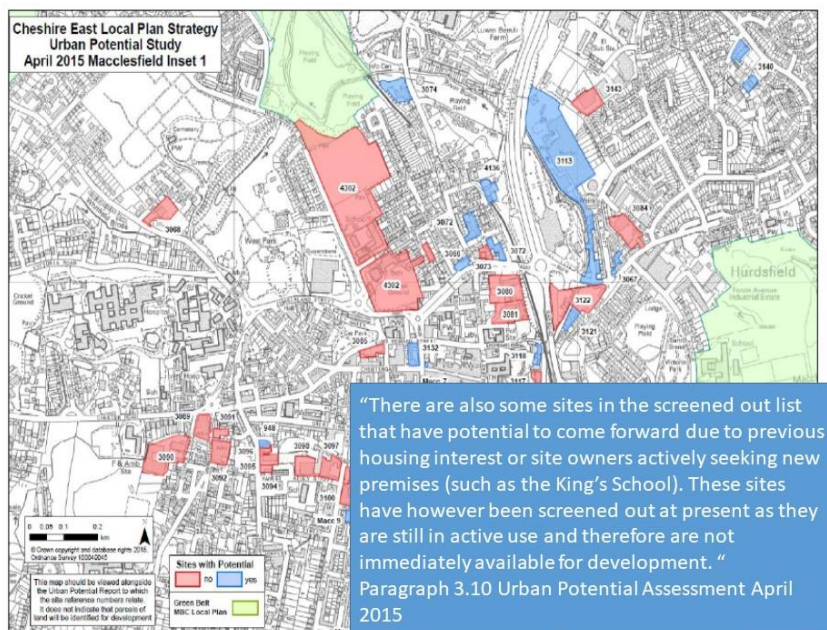
As part of Macclesfield Borough plan 2004, the King's School pitches on Westminster Road and the cricket pitch on Cumberland Street were designated 'existing open space'. In 2012 during a CEC open space assessment this site was designated 'outdoor sport facilities': Figure 1



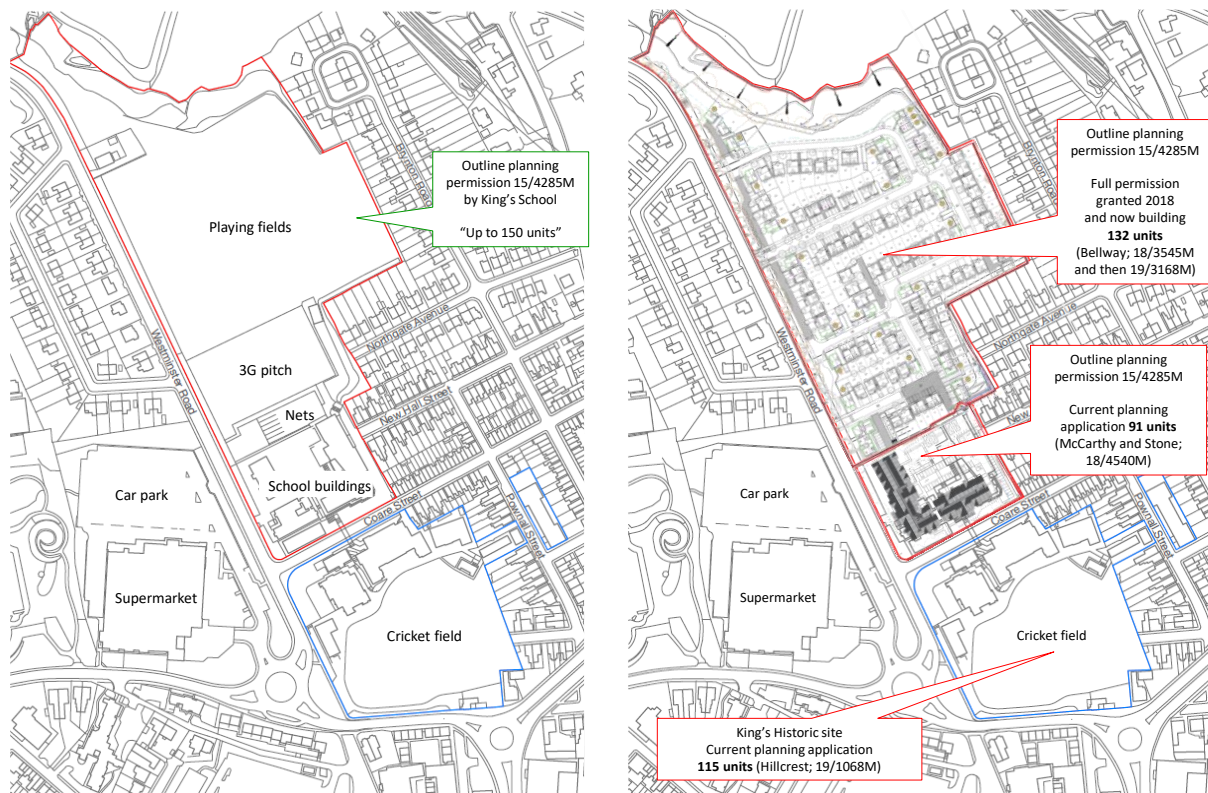
In 2013, the site was identified in Cheshire East Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as part of the King’s School Cumberland Street site (site reference 4302): Figure 2



In 2015, the CE LPS Urban Potential Assessment screened out the site because it was at that time “still in active use and therefore not immediately available” (CE LPS Urban Potential Assessment, July 2015 §3.10): Figure 3



In 2015, site 4302 was split into two sites: Westminster Road (planning application 15/4285M) and Cumberland Street. The former was then split again and both parts of this site (19/3168M and 18/4540M) have now received full planning permission and building work has started: Figure 4



In 2016, the remaining historic cricket pitch at Cumberland Street site was promoted for sale, without planning permission: Figure 5.

THE KING'S SCHOOL MACCLESFIELD < > @ B E X

FENCE AVENUE, WESTMINSTER ROAD AND CUMBERLAND STREET SITES, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE.

FOR SALE
PRIME RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH PLANNING PERMISSION ON TWO OF THE THREE SITES TO DELIVER UP TO 450 UNITS, SUBJECT TO SIGNING OF THE SDD.

LOCATION BACKGROUND FENCE AV WESTMINSTER RD CUMBERLAND / POWNALL ST PLANNING GALLERY FURTHER INFORMATION

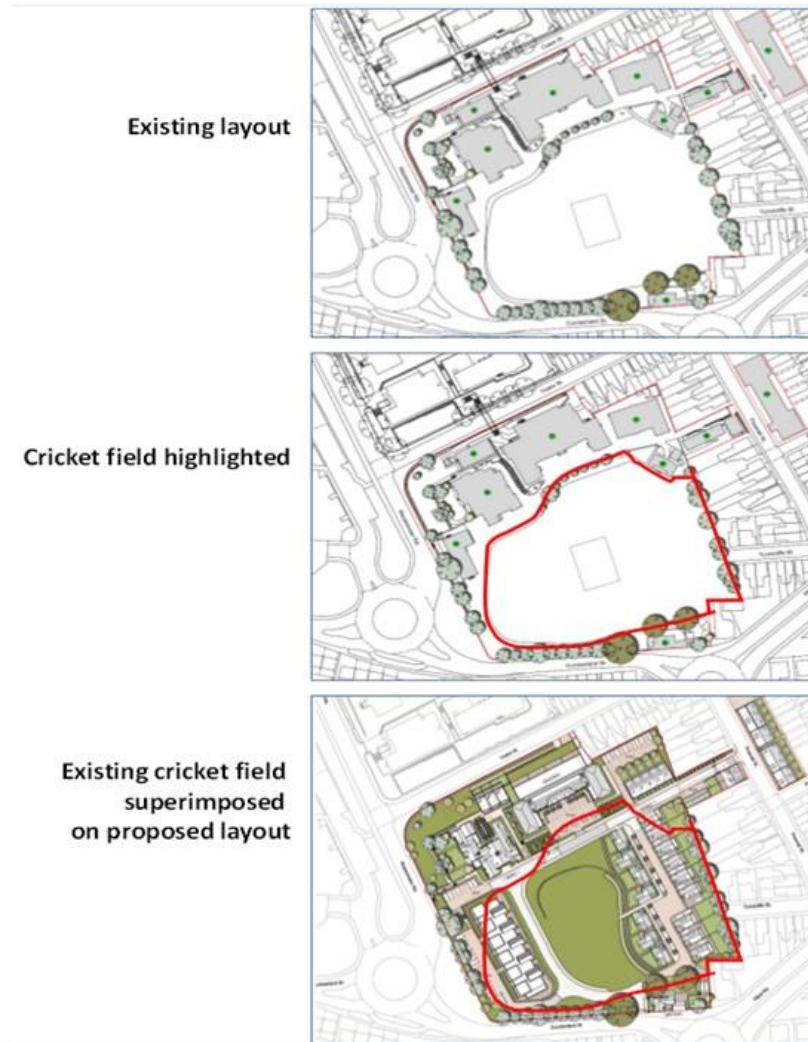
WESTMINSTER ROAD, CUMBERLAND STREET AND POWNALL STREET

The Westminster Road application can be found on the local authority website under reference number 15/4285M.

There is no relevant planning history for the land and property at Cumberland Street and Pownall Street. There are two Grade II listed buildings on the Cumberland Street site, that being the library building and lodge house next to the entrance gate. We are seeking interested parties who have the relevant expertise and experience to develop listed assets.

- a Footpath edge overlooking woodland
- b Pocket park creating a local focal point
- c Formal square enclosed by higher density homes
- d Green way following tree lined Westminster Rd
- e Apartments define Coats St corner
- f Entrance avenue aligned to mounds on top of the original school building to the south
- g Green buffer protecting amenity of adjacent homes

In 2019 King's School, in association with developers Hillcrest Homes Ltd, submitted planning application 19/1068M for 115 dwellings on the Cumberland Street site, including a street of 15 houses on the cricket pitch. The plan involves the loss of 70% of the cricket pitch: Figure 6.



A modification of this planning application was agreed by Strategic Planning Board in April 2021 but a decision notice has yet to be issued, as of 4th October 2021. The current proposal in the SADPD is for the cricket pitch to be 'Protected Open Space' which is unsound as this designation cannot last beyond 2030 if planning approval is given housing.

Designation as residential land

In June 2017, Hillcrest Homes, King's School, and the CEC Development Management Team met for a pre-application meeting for the Cumberland Street site. Then, as now, this site had no outline planning permission and only had extant permission for education. In relation to planning policy, the minutes from this meeting state:

The Kings School site is not included as a housing site within the Local Plan and would therefore be considered as a windfall site. Although the principle of residential development on the site is acceptable, Officers are keen to see a more low density scheme on the site.

Preapplication meeting with CEC, minutes produced by How planning 22nd June 2017

This change of land use of cricket pitch FROM existing open space/outdoor sports facility TO residential was encouraged by CEC chief planning officer without public consultation. In June 2017, the SADPD was in preparation and the call out for sites was still open. At the pre-application meeting on 22nd June 2017, CEC failed to act on new information, that King's School and Hillcrest Homes were considering residential development on the Cumberland Street site. This meeting should have prompted CEC planners to review the site and its planning history and request that King's submit it to the SADPD as a potential residential site. This would have allowed the full public consultation and scrutiny of change of use.

The exclusion of this site from SADPD shows that the process is unsound as CEC have been using out-of-date evidence and not acting on new evidence. They continued to use evidence from April 2015 Urban Potential Assessment, that the school was in *active use and therefore not immediately available*. By June 2017 the site was being actively promoted and there was a clear indication that the use as a school would cease.

Evidence-based documents, especially those relating to development needs and land availability, that date from two or more years before the submission date may be at risk of having been overtaken by events, particularly as they may rely on data that is even older. Procedure Guide for Local Plan examinations, June 2019 paragraph 1.1

This is not a Local Plan Strategy strategic site because at 2.16 hectares, it is too small but it should not have been allocated windfall status. In fact the government inspector, Stephen Pratt, who examined CEC LPS at this time was very clear about strategic sites and non-strategic sites

*CEC has also confirmed the definition of a “Local Plan Strategy Site” and “Strategic Location” [SD/015; PS/B006b]. Some developers and landowners are concerned about the threshold set for selecting strategic site allocations (150 dw/5ha). However, the CELPS is a strategic document, and contains site allocations that are considered to be “strategic” in nature, with a threshold similar to that used by the Secretary of State in his recovery powers for planning applications and appeals. In my Further Interim Views, I have already confirmed that this is a reasonable site size threshold in the context of Cheshire East. **Developers and landowners will have the opportunity to put forward smaller “non-strategic” sites when the SADPPD is prepared.***

Paragraph 162 CEC – Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Inspector’s Report: June 2017

As the current inspector is aware there is no proven need for further residential land in Macclesfield and no sites have been allocated for residential land use.

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