



HOPE - UNDER - DINMORE
& NEWTON

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Local Green Space to rear of Tavern Meadow



DJN Planning Limited

February 2017

For Hope-under-Dinmore Neighbourhood Plan Group

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hope-under-Dinmore Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The submission draft Plan was independently examined in October 2016.¹ Policy HUD7 in the NDP proposes to designate a field to the rear of Tavern Meadow at Hope-under-Dinmore as Local Green Space (LGS). These are green areas of particular importance to local communities. The Examiner recommended that policy HUD7 be deleted, as he felt that the requirements of national policy for such designations had not been met. In the light of the Examiner's recommendation, the Parish Council resolved at its meeting on 24 November 2016 to withdraw the NDP in order to re-formulate and re-submit the Plan.
- 1.2 This report provides further information and justification for the proposed Local Green Space, responding to the Examiner's comments, as follows:
- Site description, context and background to community use (section 2);
 - Findings of a questionnaire survey undertaken in November 2016 by the NDP Steering Group, to gather further evidence on the significance of the field to the local community (section 3);
 - A revised reasoned justification for the designation of the field as LGS in the NDP (section 4).
- 1.3 The report also explains changes which are proposed to the draft settlement boundary for the village in respect of the field and other land (section 5).
- 1.4 The report supports further public consultation on revisions to policies HUD2 (Settlement boundary) and policy HUD7 (Local Green Space) and their reasoned justification, prior to the Plan as a whole being reformulated to take into account the Examiner's other modifications and resubmitted to Herefordshire Council.

2. FIELD TO THE REAR OF TAVERN MEADOW

- 2.1 The field is some 3.0 ha with boundaries as follows (Plan 1):
- to the north, housing (Cherrybrook Close);
 - to the east, an area of open land between the field and the village road, housing (Tavern Meadow), and the village hall. The Cherry Brook flows north alongside lengths of the eastern boundary;
 - to the south, a post and wire fence with open land beyond (not included in the proposed LGS); and
 - to the west, the Cardiff-Crewe railway line, running on embankment and elevated above the field.

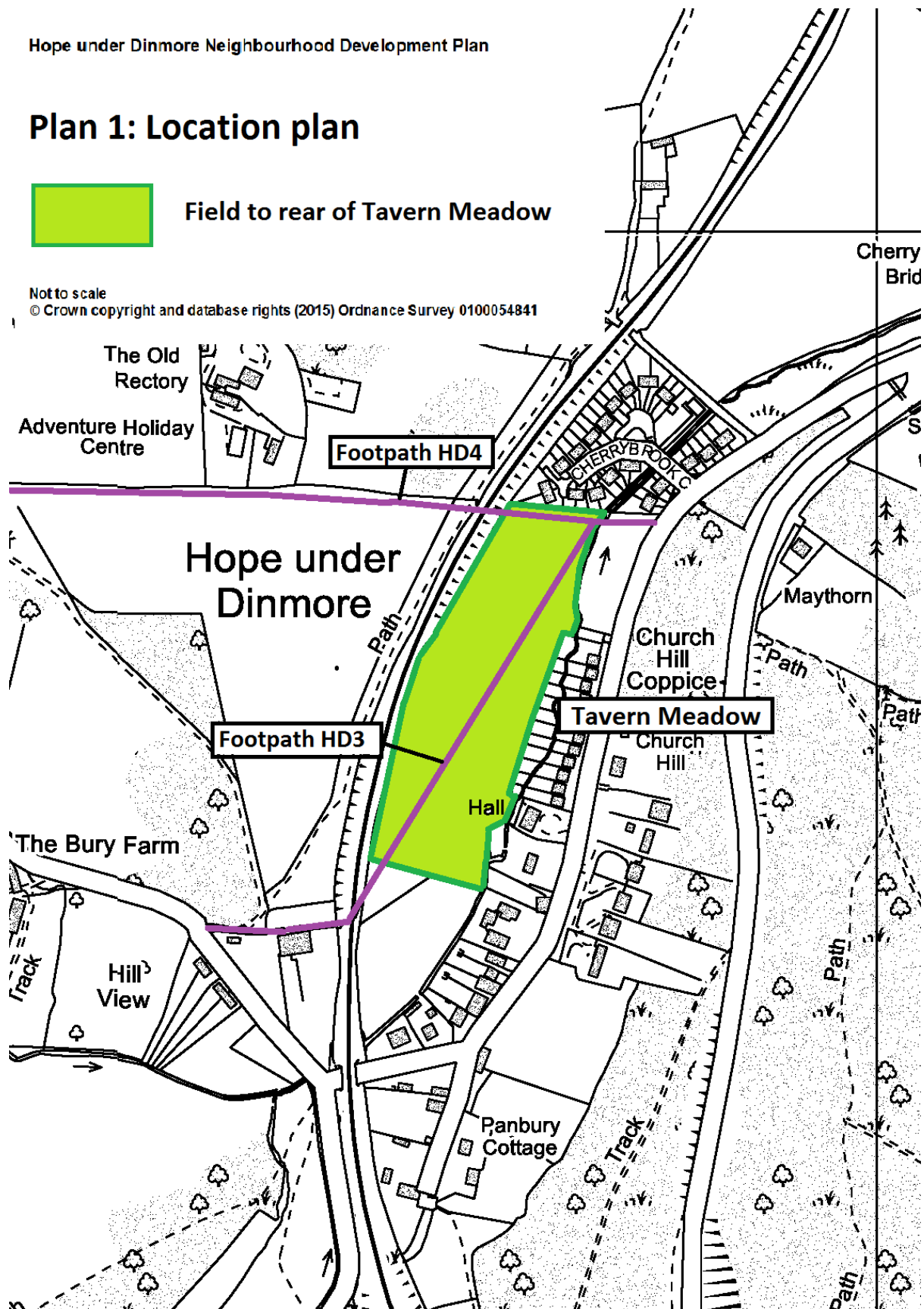
¹ The Examiner's Report to Herefordshire Council can be seen at <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/hope-under-dinmore-group>

Plan 1: Location plan



Field to rear of Tavern Meadow

Not to scale
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- 2.2 The field is crossed by two public rights of way (footpaths). Both run from the village road across the intervening area of open and via a bridge over the Cherry Brook to enter the field at its north-eastern corner. From this point, footpath HD4 runs across the north of the field and connects to an at-grade crossing of the railway to give access to open countryside. The other, footpath HD3, runs diagonally south-west across the field. It passes over the post and wire fence forming the field's southern boundary at a low gate and then crosses open land to reach a second at-grade crossing of the railway. It then connects to Block Cottages and other housing. A further footpath to the west of the railway joins the two at-grade crossings, enabling a circular walk.
- 2.3 Other informal footpaths have become established by dog-walkers over the years around the perimeter of the field.
- 2.4 Photographs at Appendix A illustrate the above features.
- 2.5 Hope-under-Dinmore village is linear in form, constrained by the local topography and the A49 trunk road and rail corridors which lie to the east and west respectively. The setting of the village is dominated to the east by the woodland of Dinmore Hill and Church Hill Coppice, which descends to meet and overhang the village road and the nearby housing including Tavern Meadow. The field provides a notable contrast to this, with a natural beauty and open aspect which complements the mature woodland. It also provides a setting to the blocks of housing and serves as a buffer between dwellings and the railway line to the west. The field makes a significant contribution to the character and setting of the village. It is the only area of open land in the vicinity which has such a close relationship with the village, emphasising its significance as an important visual amenity.
- 2.6 The field has been enjoyed as an informal community area since the 1950's, providing the only reasonably flat open space near the centre of the village. It was regularly used for team sports such as football and the original goalposts are still in situ at the northern end of the field. Agricultural usage at this time was sporadic and from 2010 to 2015 the field was let on an agricultural tenancy to a group of local residents. During this period it was used as a community area rather than for agricultural purposes, with the residents group organising maintenance and grass cutting on behalf of the community.
- 2.7 During this period the field was used by a large number of villagers for recreation, in particular walking their dogs. There is a sizeable estate of social housing adjoining the field (Cherrybrook Close) and the children of residents used the area for communal sports. It also provided a venue for village events, such as a bonfire party in 2011.
- 2.8 The field provides a safe traffic-free location for children, particularly those from the social housing estate immediately to the north. The central traffic-free position allows families to let younger children play without close supervision especially as many of the local houses directly overlook the field. This is particularly important as the road through the village is of limited width with no pavements and is the only route to and from the extensive hinterland of farmland and small businesses to the west.

- 2.9 The agricultural tenancy has now come to an end and formal access is limited to that provided by the two public footpaths, although informal usage for dog walking and children's play continues.
- 2.10 The field occupies a central village position and this helps to maintain the rural aspect of the village. Many of the houses in the village back directly onto the field and it dominates their outlook. The importance of the open aspect is reflected in the consultation responses, with a number of respondents citing the view as the most important reason for moving into their houses. Some also mentioned the level of light pollution resulting from any development of the field which would have an adverse impact on the rural nature of the village.

3. SURVEY PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

- 3.1 The survey was undertaken in November 2016. Members of the Steering Group drew up a short questionnaire (included at Appendix B). These were distributed and collected by hand within the village.
- 3.2 A total of 80 questionnaires were issued and 35 returned, a response rate of 44%.

Use of field (question 1)

- 3.3 Question 1 asked whether respondents had ever used the field.

	No.	%
Yes	29	83
No	6	17

Percentage base = number of respondents, 35.

- 3.4 Of those answering "no", three respondents felt the field was nonetheless very important, in replying to question 4; one thought it important; one felt it was unimportant and the other had no comment to make.

Frequency of use (question 2)

- 3.5 Question 2 asked how often respondents used the field in the autumn/winter and in the spring /summer.

	Autumn / winter		Spring / summer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Every day/most days	16	46	13	37
Every week	6	17	7	20
Monthly	4	11	5	14
Less frequently	3	9	2	6

Percentage base = number of respondents, 35.

- 3.6 The pattern of use is consistent over the seasons. The field is well-used, with most respondents making at least weekly use (66% in autumn/winter, 60% in spring and summer).

Reason (question 3)

- 3.7 Question 3 asked what respondents used the field for.

	No.	%
Dog walking	21	60
Use of footpaths	14	40
Fitness	9	26
Safe area for children to play	8	23

Percentage base = number of respondents, 35.

Community use and recreational value (question 4)

- 3.8 Question 4 asked respondents how important having the field was for community use or recreational value.

Very important		Important		Not important	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
26	74	6	17	3	9

Percentage base = number of respondents, 35.

- 3.9 The majority of respondents regarded the field as very important for its community use and recreational value (74%), with a further 17% seeing it as important. Overall, 91% of respondents saw the field as important or very important for these reasons.

Why is the field important to you? (question 5)

- 3.10 This question offered an opportunity for free-write comments. A total of 34 comments were received and these are shown below.

Ref.	Comment
1	I feel the field is important for children and adults to enjoy the nature and help them to keep fit.
2	Lovely view - I have been here 43 years.
3	It forms the only accessible open green space within the village.
4	Good open space for walking in a safe area due to the lane being too busy and often dangerous!
5	To hold the water back in bad weather and prevent flooding.
6	More houses will create flooding.
7	Quiet and safe for walking/dog walking.

Ref.	Comment
8	It is the only nearby safe open space to walk and play. To the front of Tavern Meadow is a dangerous road and the woodland beyond is privately owned and unsuitable for recreation.
9	Because very nice walk for us.
10	A safe area for walking dogs.
11	Take the dog for a walk across both footpaths. To walk to local garage shorter walk across the field.
12	A vital place for safe childrens play. Made hugely important by the drastic increase in traffic caused by the opening of farm shop and 300 [incomplete comment].
13	Nowhere else to walk the dog.
14	The wildlife are right on our doorstep. Its a safe green healthy space for our family to walk and play. Its peaceful and we moved here 3 years ago because of the view and nature facing on to our garden - we even have a gate straight onto the field.
15	The field and the opportunities it gave us as a family was one of the main reasons we moved here. We can spend time walking the dog & our children and grandchildren also enjoy the space as a family. It is also an important community space where you meet people from the neighbourhood, form friendships & build community spirit which is missing in many villages today.
16	Having three dogs it is so important that I have access to the field to exercise them and for my own exercise. I take my two young children into the field much as I can for exercise, to help with dogs, to go on bug hunts, to play frisbee, to play with a ball, to play in the stream, to build dens & general time & space for them to run about. It is an amazing place to bring young children up & learn about nature/countryside.
17	A major factor in our decision to purchase our house in Tavern Meadow was the location and, in particular the open aspects to the rear, overlooking the field. Whilst our concerns about any development of the field include the adverse affect on the value of our house, our overriding worry is the loss of both our outlook and the recreational benefits that the field provides.
18	That we do not 'use' the field is not the important factor, rather that it is an empty space. The reason we chose to live here is predicated on the fact that it is an empty rural space and not a piece of rural suburbia.
19	It's somewhere safe to walk with the dog away from traffic and fairly flat. All other walks involve climbing steep hills. Also we mainly chose to live here because of the rural outlook.
20	It's the only reasonably flat area for walking the dog - safe too, away from the traffic so can let him off the lead. The outlook was the most important aspect when choosing to live in Tavern Meadow.
21	Open space used by a lot of people at the centre of the village. Green space next to Cherrybrook estate. Visually an important part of the village also good to have an open view from footpath.
22	Every village needs a green space, not only for dog walking and recreation, but to balance the outlook for residents. It has been proved many times that houses need a balance of outlook. Green spaces have an enormous influence on mental stress.
23	We moved here in part because of the accessibility to green space, firstly for walking our dog and secondly for playing in a safe area with our grandchildren.

Ref.	Comment
24	It is the only accessible green space and with the increase in volume of traffic through the village, has become the only safe area for recreation and dog walking. It is also a vital part of the village flood defences. The village is at high risk of flooding - has flooded twice over the last few years - and the field forms a crucial part of the inherent drainage system. The field has been leased and used as a recreational area over a number of years. As soon as I walked into No5 Tavern Meadow and saw the outlook I decided I had to live there! That was 25 years ago and it is the longest I have lived anywhere. The greenery, peace and quiet plus the ability to appreciate the night sky due to the lack of artificial lighting. All these are irreplaceable and we would consider moving if the field behind us becomes a housing estate.
25	Although we don't use the area, it is a safe traffic free area for children dogs and walkers to roam without worry.
26	I understand it is a flood plain and do not want the village to be flooded which gives problems with access.
27	Very important for a safe family area.
28	It is not important to me. It is up to the owner.
29	I do not have a problem with houses going on the field, all I ask is that they sort the brook out, tree clearing etc. Flood prevention must be in place.
30	Safe place to walk dog and children.
31	The field is important as I have two dogs that need to be taken out a lot and the roads are dangerous to walk them on.
32	This is a safe area for us to walk the dogs as a family where the little ones can play with the dog away from the road.
33	An open green space for walking, running even tobogganning!
34	It is part of the circular walk via the railway crossing by 'Block Cottages'.

How many years have you been using the field? (question 6)

3.11 Question 6 sought views on how long respondents had been using the field.

Years using the field	No.	%
0-5	13	37
5-10	5	14
10-15	4	11
15-20	6	17
>20	2	6

3.12 The field is a long-standing local amenity. Almost half of respondents (48%) have been using the field for more than five years.

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS LOCAL GREEN SPACE

4.1 This section sets out the justification for designating the field as LGS, in the terms of the three tests set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).²

NPPF test 1: It is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves

4.2 The field is immediately adjacent to the main residential areas of the village, and is directly overlooked by housing situated to the north and east. In addition the village hall backs onto the field.

NPPF test 2: The field is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance

4.3 Replies to consultations undertaken for the NDP demonstrate that the field is regarded as special by the local community:

- Open day 2014:³ comments made included reference to the area being unsuitable for housing, flood risk and its importance as an amenity area for the village.
- Resident questionnaire survey 2015:⁴ the field was identified as the location least preferred for new housing in replies to question 5, where 12 comments referred to its value for visual amenity and access to open land. The field was also specifically identified as a local open space feature meriting protection in responses to question 17 (5 comments).
- Questionnaire survey 2016, reported here: 91% of respondents regarded the field as important or very important for its community use and recreational value (question 4). The field is regularly used on a daily or weekly basis notably by walkers (including dog-walkers) (questions 2 and 3). Replies to question 5 emphasise the significance of the field as a local visual and recreational amenity.

4.4 The particular local significance of the field is due to:

- the visual amenity it represents as a whole to the local community: the field is regarded as special by those who simply enjoy the open aspect, without needing to gain access to it. Planning Practice Guidance confirms that LGS designation may be considered even if there is no public access.⁵ This is applicable in this case, as evidenced by the following replies to question 5 in the 2016 survey:

“that we do not 'use' the field is not the important factor, rather that it is an empty space. The reason we chose to live here is predicated on the fact that it is an empty rural space and not a piece of rural suburbia”

² NPPF, para. 77.

³ Open Day events report 2014. At this early stage, the field had not been identified separately and the comments relate to the field and the open land to the south and east.

⁴ Residents questionnaire survey, Results Report, May 2015.

⁵ PPG reference ID: 37-015-20140306

“Visually an important part of the village also good to have an open view from footpath”

“every village needs a green space, not only for dog walking and recreation, but to balance the outlook for residents. It has been proved many times that houses need a balance of outlook. Green spaces have an enormous influence on mental stress”.

- its contribution to the character and setting of the village: as set out above at para. 2.5, the field’s open aspect provides a notable contrast to the mature woodland to the east of the village, a setting to the blocks of housing and serves to distance dwellings from the railway line to the west. The field is the only area of flat, open land in the vicinity with such a close relationship with the village, emphasising its significance as an important visual amenity.
- the visual amenity it offers as a whole to the users of the public footpaths: the public footpaths which cross the field are regularly used by residents. Footpath users benefit from the natural beauty and open aspect of the field as a whole, even though there is no formal access agreement in place.
- the recreational access it offers both via the public footpaths and other informal footpaths and use of the open space as a whole.

- 4.5 The field as a whole is demonstrably special to the local community. Its visual amenity, access and recreational characteristics do not arise in respect of any other tract of land around the village. Due to the particular combination of proximity, visibility, topography and access the field has a uniquely special relationship with the community. It is these aspects that give it its particular local significance.

NPPF test 3: It is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land

- 4.6 The field is local in character because of its close relationship with the village, including the neighbouring housing areas to the north and east. The elevated boundary with the railway to the west enhances its local character, adding to the sense of enclosure and its clear relationship with the community it serves.
- 4.7 The field is not an extensive tract of land, applying a degree of judgement and taking into account site characteristics, its context and relationship to the settlement. It has clear, well-marked boundaries provided by the railway embankment, Cherry Brook and housing. It is limited in extent by these boundaries and forms a distinct visual entity which is enclosed and contained. As a result, the proposed LGS designation is limited and specific to the field and its special characteristics. In this regard, it is very different from the “blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements” cautioned against by Planning Practice Guidance.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

5. CHANGES TO THE DRAFT SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

- 5.1 Changes are also proposed to the draft settlement boundary for the village that was included in the submission Plan. The revised boundary is shown on Plan 2, together with the proposed LGS. The revised boundary more accurately relates to the main built-up area of the village, and excludes open land which is important to its character and setting. In making these revisions, regard has been had to Herefordshire Council guidance.⁷
- 5.2 The field to the rear of Tavern Meadow has been excluded for these reasons, as has the open land between the field/Brook and the village road. The contribution of the field to the character and setting of the village is set out above. The open land between the field/Cherry Brook and the road offers a break in the developed frontage on the west side of the road. It also affords attractive views to the west, through the trees along the watercourse and over the field.

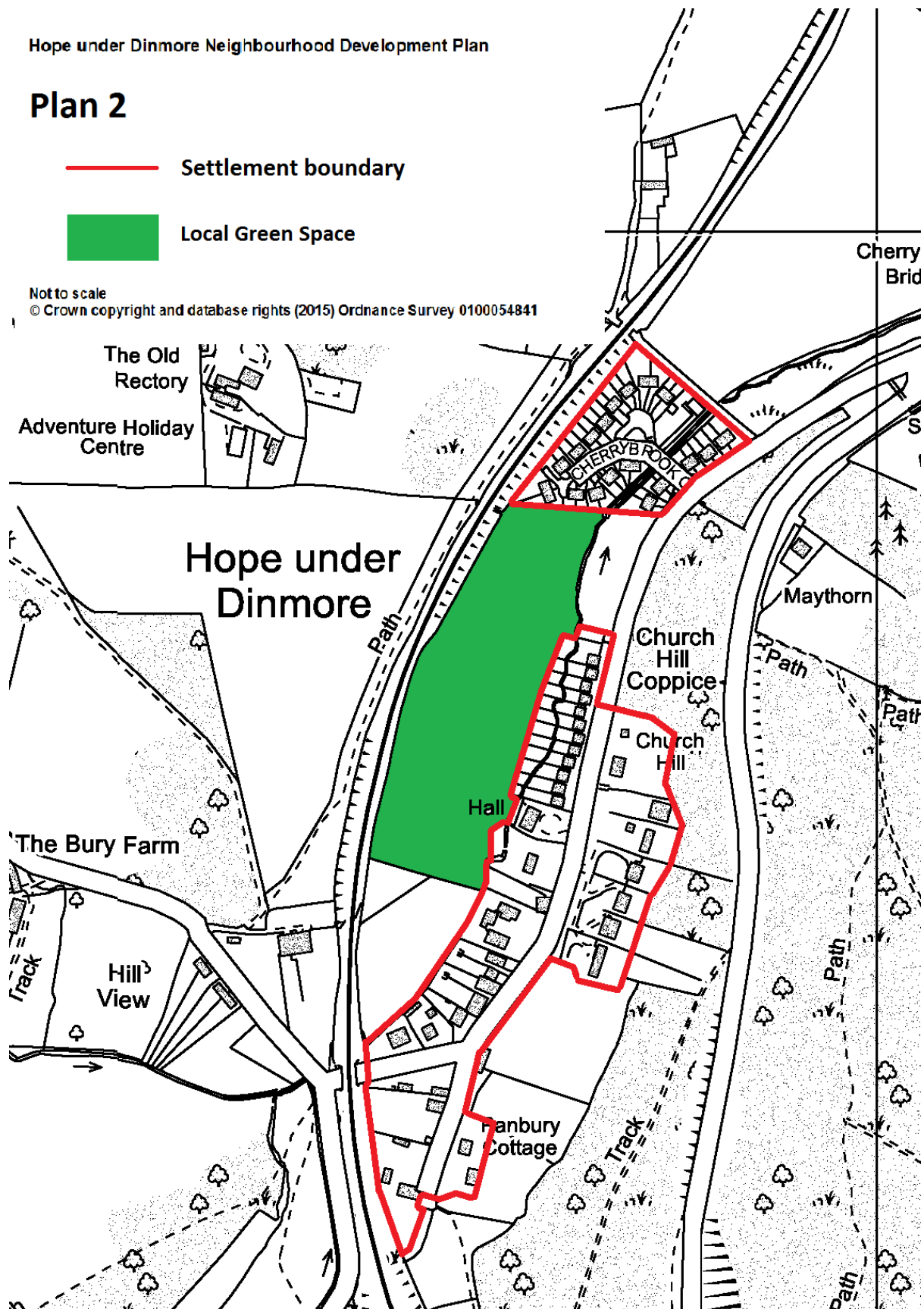
⁷ Herefordshire Council, Guide to settlement boundaries, Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 20, rev. June 2015

Plan 2

— Settlement boundary

Local Green Space

Not to scale
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APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS

Field viewed from south-west showing stile and route of public footpath HD3, as maintained by local residents



View from within field, looking north-east along footpath HD3 towards Cherrybrook Close



Goalposts in north of field, adjacent Cherrybrook Close



Footpath HD4 and stile access to at-grade crossing of railway in north of the field



Informal footpath around perimeter of the field, adjacent to railway embankment



Field viewed from south-west corner, showing Cherrybrook Close and Tavern Meadow housing with the woodland of Dinmore Hill in the background



APPENDIX B: COVERING LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

To the Residents of Hope Under Dinmore

The purpose of the attached questionnaire is to assess the importance of the field behind Tavern Meadow to the residents of Hope Under Dinmore, as this is the only flat green accessible area in the heart of the village.

The map illustrates the area indicated as local green space.

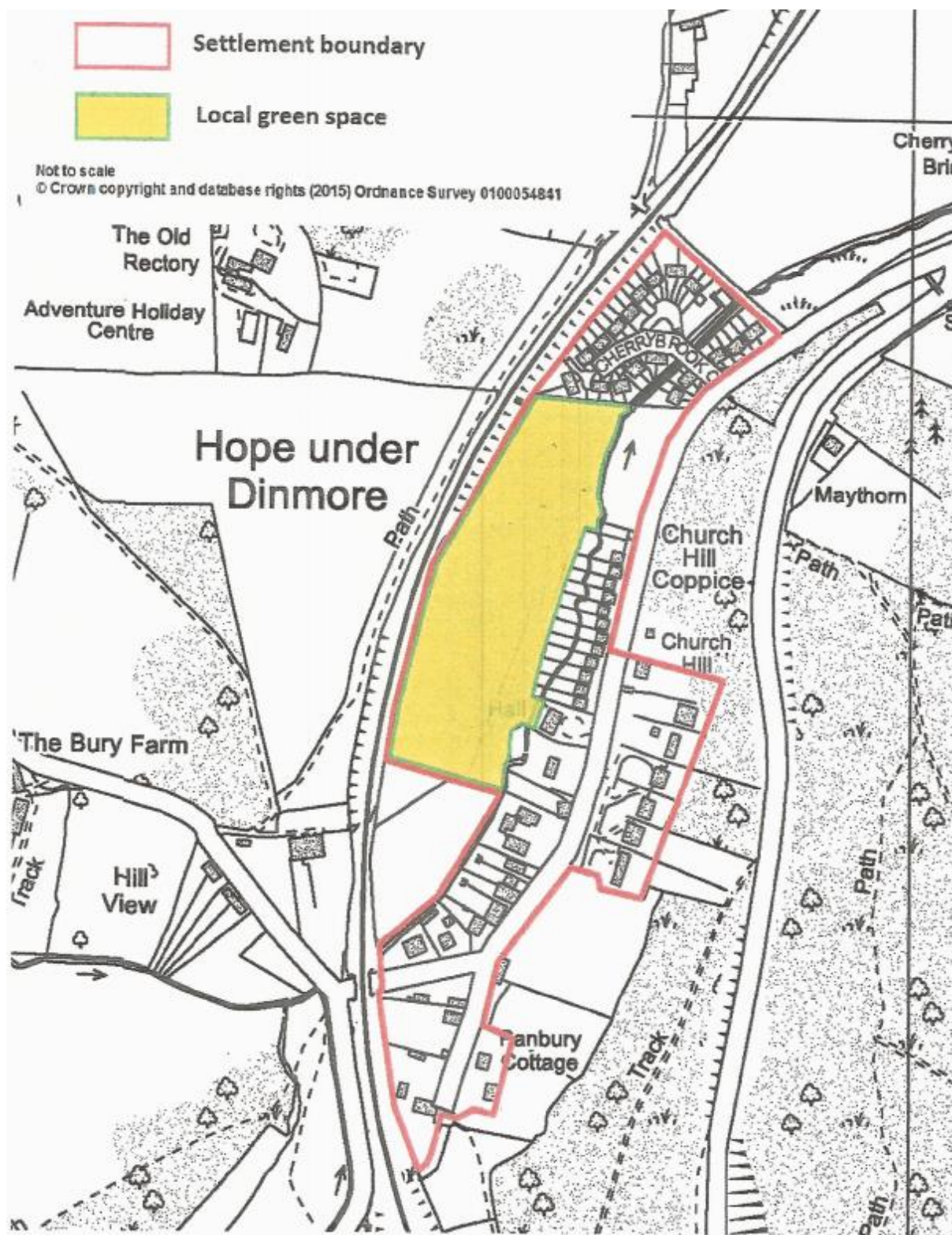
Therefore, it's essential that we gather your reasons as to why this green space is important to you and what you use it for, how often and its significance.

If we called and you were unavailable, we will call back to collect your questionnaire

Many thanks for your support and cooperation

The neighbourhood development plan committee

Please feel free to contact Kathy Clarkson on 01568 615149 if you would like to discuss further



Proposals Map

Hope Under Dinmore

- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

- | Please tick one box only in each row | Autumn / Winter | Spring/Summer |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|
| Every day / Most days | | |
| Every week | | |
| Monthly | | |
| Less frequent | | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| Dog walking | |
| Using the footpath across the field | |
| For fitness | |
| Safe area for children to play | |
| Other – please specify - | |

- | Very Important | Important | Not important |
|----------------|-----------|---------------|
|----------------|-----------|---------------|

- | |
|--|
| |
|--|

6. How many years have you been using the field? please circle

0-5
5-10
10-15
15-20

7. Historical use of the field – do you have any of the following

Memories	
Photos	

If you do have photos or memories, can we contact you if required ?

Name	Contact no -
------	--------------

8. Please indicate which area of the village you live

Cherry Brook	
Tavern Meadow	
Church / Hill View	
Properties Beyond Tavern Meadow to the Railway Viaduct	

Thank you for assisting us in completing this short questionnaire