



Assington

Neighbourhood Plan

2018-2036

Supporting Document:

Assington Local Green Space Assessment

Assington Local Green Spaces

There are a number of green spaces within Assington parish which make important contributions to the character and setting of the built environment. However, Assington lacks a key feature of most villages in the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands' landscape type in that it doesn't have "frequent small to moderate sized greens". Unlike many other villages across the district, the Babergh Mid Suffolk Preferred Options Joint Local Plan does not designate any important open spaces in the village.

Paragraphs 99 to 101 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) gives the possibility of identifying green spaces in neighbourhood plans that meet certain characteristics as 'Local Green Spaces'. The paragraphs state:

99. 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.

100. 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.

101. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

Government guidance states that designation in itself does not confer any rights of public access.

The Identified Green Spaces in Assington

There are fifteen distinct areas of land close to the village centre of Assington (three of which also lie between the village and the Further Street hamlet), which are green land and not arable. Of these, twelve have been assessed below as fully meeting the criteria for LGS designation; two others (the playing field and the Churchyard) meet the criteria but have been excluded as they have protections either existing or given elsewhere in the plan, and one (the Thicks) has been excluded as an "extensive tract of land".

Appraisal

The following pages provide a detailed assessment of the identified spaces to ascertain whether they conform to the definition in paragraphs 99-101 of the NPPF 2019, in order to support their designation as Local Green Spaces in the emerging Assington Neighbourhood Plan.

In the appraisal we reference proximity to the village centre. This is given as 2 figures:

- distance to the village (Any point on The Street extending from Hill Farm to Cootes Corner and from there to the end of Partridge Row in Barracks Road);
- distance to a village centre point (taken as being the Phone Box).

We have also established that the areas chosen are special to the local community. This was achieved at the April 2019 consultation event, which included a ballot of sites, with people being able to vote for up to 5 sites. Not included in the ballot were the three County Wildlife Sites, which it was considered would be protected by their given status.

Most of these sites are very biodiverse and have substantial ecological value. The extensive list of species to be found on them are detailed in the 'Biodiversity: Flora and Fauna' supporting document.

1) Assington Park, north part



Site Details	
Description and purpose	This former parkland is partly arable, one threepenny-bit lodge house remains adjacent, it retains the lime avenue which is possibly amongst the finest in the county, with its grassland, and a modern lake.
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	12 hectares
Who owns it?	Owners of Park Farm
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	The Street: 300m, Centre: 650m.
Is there public access?	Public Footpath through grassland and avenue, gives full view
Is there any ecological significance?	Lake attracts waterfowl
Is it historically significant?	Park presumed post-mediaeval. Parkland is a classic Suffolk feature, and Assington's is the only one now to be seen from the A134 between Colchester and Sudbury (though now with the Hall a ruin, and missing the two other Lodge houses, not the celebrated landmark it was sixty years ago)
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	Popular for walks, with classic historical appearance, exceptionally fine trees, outstanding view, and 'big sky' experience. received 9% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	A self-contained landscape, distinct from the surrounding farmed land
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

2) Assington Park, south part



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Parkland in pristine condition
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations	The Church of St Edmund is Grade I
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	11 ha
Who owns it?	Owners of The Hall
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	The Street: 250m, centre: 590m.
Is there public access?	Accessed by 3 public footpaths
Is there any ecological significance?	Natural grassland, and a small wet valley, both with some notable plants

Is it historically significant?	Park post-mediaeval, earthworks appearing to be relics of the mediaeval village and monastic fish-pond
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	The fine setting is much appreciated: the extent of unploughed grassland and the fine parkland trees are exceptional for this part of Suffolk. The Park tells much of the village's history and continuity, into the mid-20th century, as does the Church, and is precious to the villagers. Received 9% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	The heart of an intact example of a scarce, exceptional landscape (together with the Church, Hall ruins, precincts e.g. Coach House, and north part of the Park)
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

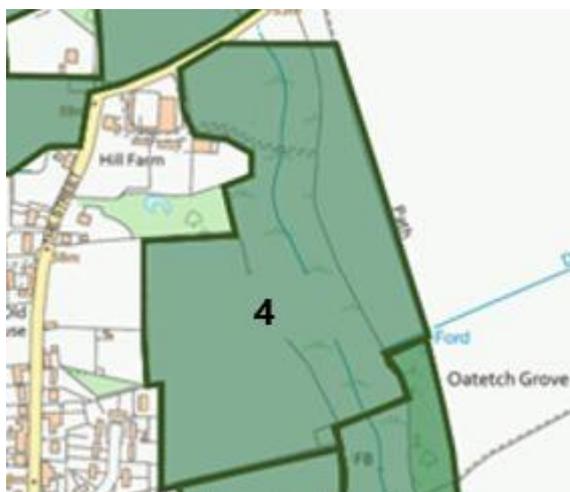
3) Area of the Old Vicarage



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Part grassland with trees, part rough grassland, part arable
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None

Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	1 ha approx
Who owns it?	Owners of The Hall (part) and of Park Farm (part)
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	The Street: adjacent, centre: 330m.
Is there public access?	By permission only, but there is a possibility of free access being granted, from the public footpath which runs adjacent to it.
Is there any ecological significance?	Natural grassland, and a small wet valley, both with some notable plants.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	The small portion (0.25 ha) between the Coach House and Old Rectory is a modern addition in parkland style, which is being considered by the owners for possible public use. The area between the Old Rectory and Dale Cottage is valued as the sole piece of open ground beside The Street, opening onto wide countryside, and overflow parking for the Church. Received 6% of the votes at the consultation
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	A moderately-sized area, the grassland resembling parkland with light tree cover
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

4) Hill Farm land, with rear of “Celandine”



Site Details	
Description and purpose	The natural grazing land below Hill Farm, on each side of the Brook.
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	8 hectares
Who owns it?	The owners of Hill Farm
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	From north end: The Street 100m; from south end: Village centre 200 metres.
Is there public access?	Public footpath runs along the east side.
Is there any ecological significance?	The biodiversity along the Brook here is natural, due to an uninterrupted history of grazing
Is it historically significant?	The tenure of this field is given in a Charter of James I.

Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	This land provides an idyllic clear view framing the Church; the merit of this is set out prominently in <i>Place Services'</i> 2019 report to Babergh District Council ' <i>Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment'</i> page 24, "Many of the higher status assets, particularly churches have been sited on high points in the landscape, and were deliberately intended to be visible in long views throughout the wider landscape. This gives these assets large settings, which make an important contribution to their value, and both extent and value of their wider landscape setting, will be integral considerations in considering proposed site allocations." Currently there is a complete view from footpaths and the road.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	This land is exceptionally picturesque, natural countryside, and being so close to the village centre is regarded in Assington as a key asset. Received 21% of the votes at the consultation.
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

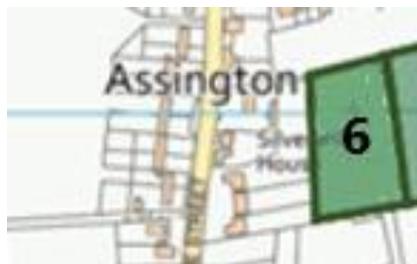
5) Meadow View



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Established grassland
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None

Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	1.5 hectares
Who owns it?	Private owner, not currently resident in parish
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	Village centre: 150m by path
Is there public access?	Crossed by public footpath with full view of site. There has always been public use, but not under any agreement.
Is there any ecological significance?	No
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	This field is the closest open green space to the centre of the village, and much valued as, apart from the football pitch, this and the Thicks are the only pieces of land that have full public access, albeit informal and unwritten. Its public footpath is the only usable way from The Street to the Assington Brook valley. It provides the only view to the East from the village, an idyllic and very important vista. Received 8% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	Closest accessible open space to centre of village. An enclosed secluded area of grassland
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

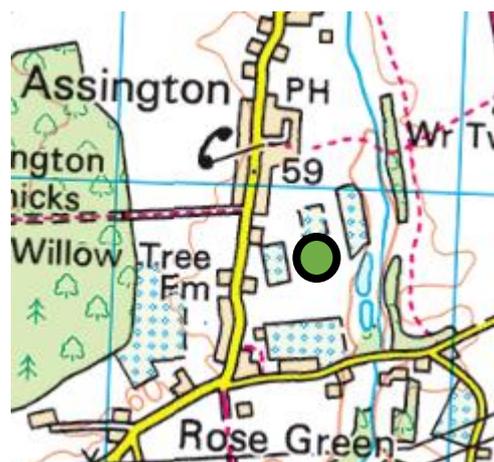
6) Wildlife Area



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Land formerly intended for either amenity or recreation, subsequently abandoned or overgrown but now utilised as an important wildlife area.
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	0.6 hectares
Who owns it?	Babergh District Council
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	Village centre via path: 150m
Is there public access?	Full public access is allowed on a 5-year agreement with Parish Council, otherwise there has always been public use, but not under any agreement
Is there any ecological significance?	It consists primarily of blackthorn and oak scrub, which is an important habitat lacking in the village, it has sporadically been used

	by scarce breeding birds, and is now being managed by the Parish Council for wildlife habitat.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	This small area is at the centre of the village. Together with the allotments and playing field, it is the only land in the village in public ownership, and at the Parish Council's request was put into their management around 5 years ago. Received 8% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	It is a small area surrounded by a hedge and no longer has common features with neighbouring land.
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

7) The Mere



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Natural grassland including a flooded marsh, it is presumed not to have had any previous use other than grazing.
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None

What is the Site Area?	1.5 hectares
Who owns it?	Private owner, not currently resident in parish
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	Village centre: 150m
Is there public access?	None, but there has been long-standing public use, which has fallen off since the paths leading beyond it were closed off by landowners.
Is there any ecological significance?	Named from the small wetland marsh shared with Site 8, this is an interesting and very pretty area, exemplifying the original landform of the area, i.e. glaciated sand and gravel with negligible soil cover, overlying London clay, so that dry ground at the top slopes to permanent springs lower down. No evidence of soil disturbance e.g. ploughing, apart from some very small gravel-digging which provides additional characteristic flora.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	This land, together with immediately adjoining sites, forms the only natural area accessible from the village centre. Lack of any potential for vehicle access here, opens the possibility that an owner may in the future provide scenic amenity land which the village is in need of. Received 6% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	Surrounded by hedges, a secluded valley side whereas most fields locally are arable.
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

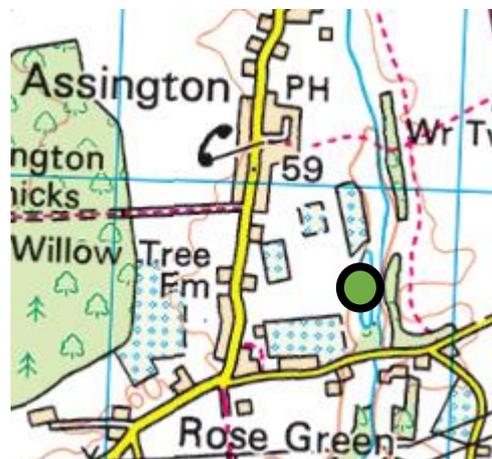
8) Oatetch Grove and Meadow



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Unspoilt grazing meadow and a small ancient wood
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	County Wildlife Site, Ancient Woodland Inventory
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	3.5 hectares
Who owns it?	Private owners, not currently resident in parish
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	300m
Is there public access?	Crossed by a public footpath with full view of site
Is there any ecological significance?	This land is designated as a County Wildlife Site, since its small ancient woodland, and permanent grazing land along the Brook, including flooded marshland area, give it a full range of characteristic

	biodiversity. It is to be hoped the new owner of the Meadow doesn't change the grazing regime.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	There is an outstanding view framing the Church in the distance. The public footpath running direct from The Street is a major amenity, it joins the important scenic footpath running the length of the village north to south, giving a unique view of the church and almost the whole village. The whole site altogether gives an irreplaceable, classic, idyllic natural experience; and its importance to the village cannot be overstated; it is inalienable from the village, and being so close to the village centre is regarded in Assington as a key asset. (Not included in the consultation vote as a County Wildlife Site).
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	An enclosed site from which no houses can be seen, only the adjacent natural land which is the small contained valley floor
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

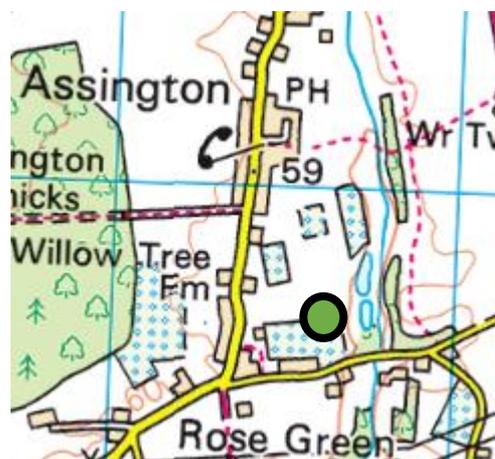
9) The Reservoir



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Fenny valley field with two small fishing lakes
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	2.5 hectares
Who owns it?	Private owner, not currently resident in parish
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	Distances by paths - From south end: Partridge Row 120m (no current access), from north end: Village centre 300m

Is there public access?	None, but there has been long-standing public use, and for some years there was a permissive circular walk; public use has fallen off since the paths leading beyond it were closed off by landowners.
Is there any ecological significance?	Peaty grass area and aquatic and waterside areas, surrounded by trees of wet woodland, regular sightings of aquatic and waterside fauna.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	The site has long been valued for its seclusion, naturalness, tranquillity and wildlife sightings. The land has in the past been a regular route for circular walks, which it is thought the landowners may again allow in future, and its value to the village cannot be overstated. Received 15% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	A secluded wet meadow contained by trees and steep slopes
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

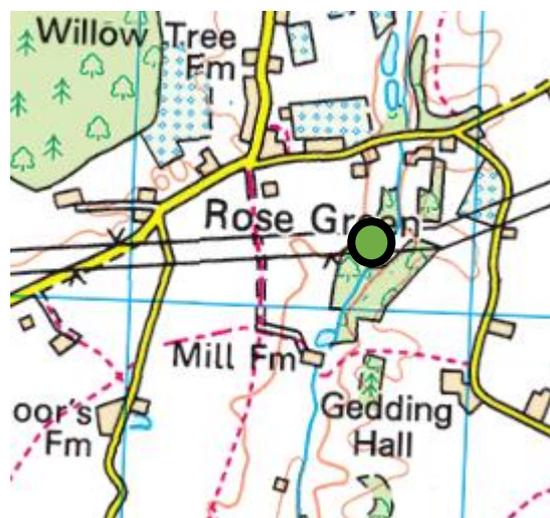
10) Part of Old Orchards



Site Details	
Description and purpose	The former Orchards surround the village centre. These are green space i.e. grassland, but together they could amount to an extensive piece of land which disqualifies them as Local Green Space. Here however we refer to one remnant which has particular scenic and natural value and where we foresee public amenity access.
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	Area selected is 1 hectare
Who owns it?	Owner of Assington Barns (shops and restaurant)
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	The Street 200m, Village centre 600m

Is there public access?	None. There is hope of re-gaining public or permissive access via the Reservoir area once nearby development with existing planning permission has been completed.
Is there any ecological significance?	This small field with grassland and mature hedges shares an importance with neighbouring small hedged fields and gardens, for breeding songbirds, small mammals, badgers and other wildlife, which together provide the general biodiversity of Assington's inhabited village centre.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	The field is on the sloping valley side, has developed from former orchard into a pretty spot which relates closely to the Reservoir area. The two together make a valued contribution to the village's wildlife connectivity. Received 5% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	Surrounded by hedges, it is not now connected to any other of the former orchards, only to the secluded Reservoir area
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

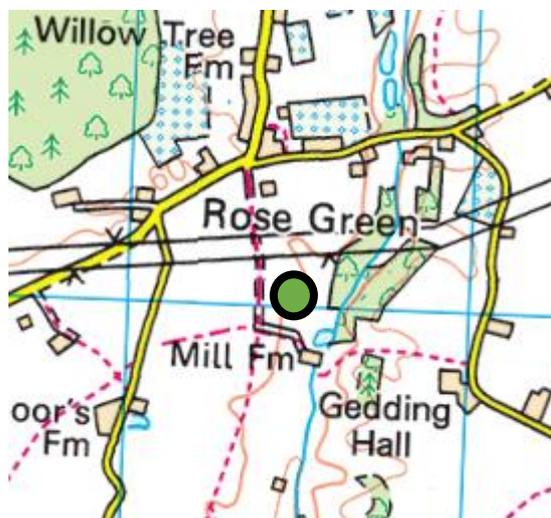
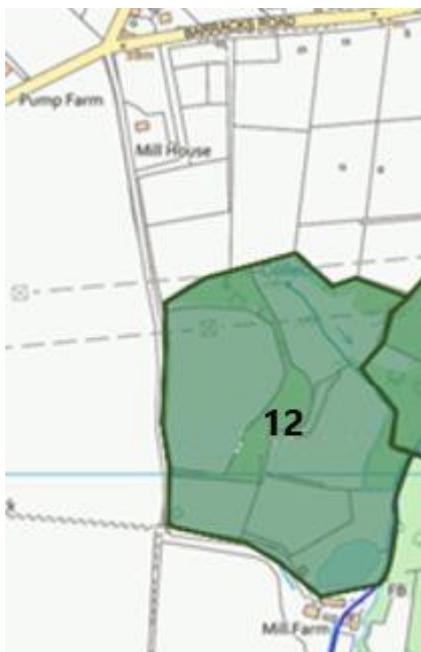
11) Cotton Wood



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Wet woodland which has grown up with trees and scrub
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	4.5 hectares
Who owns it?	East part: Owners of adjacent Assington Autos site, not resident; west part: owner-occupiers of "Brookfields"
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	Partridge Row 300m; Village centre 850m

Is there public access?	No (and the woodland is too wet and tangled to be easily accessed)
Is there any ecological significance?	Wet woodland on peaty fen along the natural Brook, which meets Suffolk's definition of Biodiversity Action Plan "wet woodland" habitat, and provides high quality scrub habitat. This results from the springline where glaciated gravels overlies London clay, and has not suffered the usual agricultural drainage, so is a scarce landform remnant of a classic Stour Valley type; and there is a biodiversity of characteristic scarce species of peatland, and with wildlife-rich ponds adjacent. Lies between steep wooded valley sides, with permanent grassland above, and close to the Stour Valley Project Area.
Is it historically significant?	No
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	Very important for biodiversity, known in Assington as a scarce habitat remnant, due to the development upstream of two extensive industrial sites on fen land. A fine part of the scenery, viewed from the Leavenheath road. Received 9% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	Isolated by surrounding steep wooded valley sides
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation

12) Mill Farm Land



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Grazing land, orchard and wet woodland
Checklist	
Are there any statutory designations?	None
Is the site designated for any purpose in the Local Plan?	None
Are there any current planning permissions on the site?	None
What is the Site Area?	5.4 hectares
Who owns it?	Owner-occupier of Assington Mill
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Is it close to the community it services?	The Street 250m. Village centre 900m
Is there public access?	Public footpath on 2 sides, giving full view of most of the site

Is there any ecological significance?	This central part of Mill farm, together with the adjacent mill pool, has long been known as a reservoir for the abundant wildlife of the parish. The grassland is well established and grazed, and the site is carefully managed for its natural state, and is close to the Stour Valley Project Area.
Is it historically significant?	This and an adjoining field is the farmland of the celebrated Assington Co-operative, which lifted villagers out of the rural destitution of the 19thC.
Is it demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance?	Here, a favourite public footpath from The Street runs by a pretty orchard and wet marshland, through a sunken lane, then continues to lead via the very picturesque pond and yard of Assington Mill en route to Leavenheath; and so draws a steady number of walkers. Received 14% of the votes at the consultation.
Is it local in character and is not an extensive tract of land?	A small set of distinctive contained fields, typifying a less industrialised era of farming
Conclusion:	Meets LGS criteria and qualifies for LGS designation