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Matter 10 - Site Allocations

Hearing Statement on H1Sq – Hardwick Lane Recreation Ground, Sutton-In-Ashfield

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10.60 What evidence is there that the site is no longer needed for open space?

The council's justification for the removal of Hardwick Lane Recreation Ground from its green space designation relies on the Ashfield Public Open Space Strategy (2016–2026). This strategy outlines a distance-based approach to green space provision, suggesting that residents should live within 480 meters of neighbourhood/destination green spaces. However, our findings challenge the validity of this claim:

Accessibility:

If Hardwick Lane green space is removed, residents at The Homelands will live more than 480 meters from accessible green space. This directly contradicts the council's stated goal of maintaining green space within the required distance.

Lack of Provision for Elderly and Disabled Residents:

The Ashfield Open Space Strategy does not explicitly address the specific needs of elderly and disabled residents. While distance is a useful measure, accessibility for these groups must consider factors such as terrain, paths and proximity. Hardwick Lane offers an accessible and level green space for the elderly and disabled residents living nearby at The Homelands and St. Modwens Court.

Limitations of Alternative Green Spaces:

The council references Cowpasture Lane as a suitable alternative, however it is an open play area, primarily used by young people, while Hardwick Lane has fence/wall on all four sides and offers more tranquility and safety for the elderly and disabled.

10.61 Is the allocation justified?

The inclusion of Hardwick Lane Recreation Ground as a development site in the Local Plan is not justified due to the following reasons:

Contradiction with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Policy EV5 aims to protect all green spaces and does not provide a criterion for selection. Local Green Spaces are meant to be preserved if they are close to the community and hold special significance. Hardwick Lane has been used for recreational purposes by the local community for 100 years.

Failure to Address Local Needs:

The council's assessment does not consider local community feedback, which overwhelmingly supports retaining Hardwick Lane as a green space. Sutton-in-Ashfield is already densely populated, and further development risks compromising the quality of life for existing residents. The Framework requires that planning decisions take into account the views and needs of the local community.

Impact on Environmental Protection:

Hardwick Lane serves as a natural buffer, reducing air and noise pollution from the surrounding industrial units. Removing this space will exacerbate these issues. The NPPF stresses the role of green spaces in mitigating climate change and enhancing biodiversity. Development that reduces green space contradicts these objectives unless substantial environmental benefits are provided in compensation .

Social Equity

Removing Hardwick Lane disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly those without easy access to alternative green spaces. The council's strategy must balance development needs with social equity and environmental sustainability.

Promoting Health and Well-being:

Access to high-quality green spaces supports community health, well-being, and social cohesion. Policies encourage maintaining and improving such spaces to benefit residents and nature. Any loss contradicts the NPPF's goal of promoting healthy lifestyles and safeguarding facilities critical to community needs .

Both Google and Apple Maps state that Cowpasture Lane play area is 0.3miles from the Homelands, a cul de sac of 14 purpose built bungalows for the elderly and/or disabled. Using a trundle wheel we measured it at 483 meters

