

**And NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**



**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO CABINET**

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**Report Title:** Green Space Protection Update

**Submitted by:** Deputy Chief Executive / Service Director Sustainable Environment

**Portfolios:** Sustainable Environment and Finance, Town Centres & Growth

**Ward(s) affected:** All

| <b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b><u>Key Decision</u></b> | <b>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> | <b>No <input type="checkbox"/></b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| To provide Cabinet an update on the work underway by the Council to support Fields in Trust applications which allow a permanent status for green spaces and carbon capture areas over and above allocations in the Local Plan and the Green Spaces Strategy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                            |                                                |                                    |
| <b><u>Recommendation</u></b><br><br>That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notes the progress made with the Fields in Trust work being undertaken.</li><li>• Notes the updates on the Village Green Applications made historically, the calling of a Public Inquiry and that the Council designates an officer to support the Inquiry for the Sandy Lane Village Green status in January 2026.</li><li>• Authorises the Deputy Chief Executive and the Service Director Sustainable Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Environment and Finance, Town Centres and Growth to continue the work required with the Fields in Trust applications to secure our sites protection.</li></ul> |                            |                                                |                                    |
| <b><u>Reasons</u></b><br><br>The Council has sought to secure sites for open space and for tree planting which it is hoped will be permanent features of the Council's green spaces and wider environment. The Fields in Trust status gives these site permanent protection as green spaces and thus secures the long- term aspiration for these sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                            |                                                |                                    |

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Council has sought to secure sites for open space and for tree planting which it is hoped will be permanent features of the Council's green spaces and wider environment. The Fields in Trust status gives these site permanent protection as green spaces and thus secures the long- term aspiration for these sites.
- 1.2 Since the last Cabinet report in May 2025 work has been underway to submit applications for Fields in Trust status and this report will list the sites that are been considered by the Fields in Trust Charity.

- 1.3** In the last two months the Council have received update notifications from Staffordshire County Council on the historic Village Green Applications made in the Borough over the last ten years.



## **2. Issues and Proposals**

- 2.1** Since the last Cabinet report on this subject the following sites have been submitted to into the Fields in Trust application process.

Submitted as Phase 1 on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025:-

- Arnold Grove Bradwell
- Chesterton Park
- Newchapel Recreation Ground
- Sandy Lane

Submitted as Phase 2 on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025:-

- Bathpool Park
- Birchenwood Countryside Park
- Guernsey Drive Westlands
- Leys Drive/Whitmore Road
- Lyme Valley Park Clayton
- Lyme Valley Park Town
- Waterhays Open Space
- Wye Road Car Park
- Wye Road/Bunny Hill

Submitted as Phase 3 on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

- Bateswood
- Clough Hall Park
- Harriet Higgins/Poolfields LNR
- The Butts

- 2.2** The following sites are to be submitted in phase 4 (by the of November 2025):-

- The Wammy
- Thistleberry Parkway
- Norwich Place / Stafford Avenue
- Lyme Forest
- Crackley Recreation Ground / Field

- 2.3** The following site have been removed from the initial schedule of sites and will not need nor benefit from Fields in Trust protection:-

- Wolstanton Marsh (Common Land) as confirmed by the Duchy of Lancaster, the landowner
- Silverdale Cemetery – protected as a burial site
- Repton Drive – approved as a Village Green and no further protection required
- Newcastle Crematorium – protected as a burial site
- Newcastle Road Open Space – approved as a Village Green and no further protection required
- Keele Cemetery – protected as a burial site

- 2.4** Village Green Applications

The following sites have been the subject of outstanding Village Green Applications (VGA) and have now been reviewed and Staffordshire County Council have recommended and agreed the following:-



- Sandy Lane Newcastle, an Inquiry is required on this site and has been set for January 2026
- Mitchells Wood Green (no LS) / Shrewsbury Drive Chesterton, Approved as a Village Green and no further protection is required
- Clayton Road Clayton, Approved as a Village Green and will be submitted on Phase 4
- Repton Drive & Rossall Avenue Westlands, Approved and is too small for Fields in Trust protection at less than 0.5 acres
- Thomas Street Talke, Pending - will be reported in subsequent reports to Cabinet
- Winchester Drive Westlands, Approved as a Village Green and is too small for Fields in Trust protection at less than 0.5 acres
- Newchapel Road, Rejected as a Village Green and the Fields in Trust application for this site will therefore be made accordingly
- Pennyfields Road, Pending – will be reported in subsequent reports to Cabinet

### **3. Recommendation**

#### **3.1 That Cabinet:-**

- Notes the progress made with the Fields in Trust work being undertaken.
- Notes the updates on the Village Green Applications made historically, the calling of a Public Inquiry and the Council's support at the Inquiry for the Sandy Lane Village Green status in January 2026.
- Authorises the Deputy Chief Executive and the Service Director Sustainable Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Environment and Finance, Town Centres and Growth to continue the work required with the Fields in Trust applications to secure our sites protection.

### **4. Reasons**

- 4.1** The Council has sought to secure sites for open space and for tree planting which it is hoped will be permanent features of the Council's green spaces and wider environment. The Fields in Trust status should give these site permanent protection as green spaces and thus secures the long-term aspirations for these sites.
- 4.2** Staffordshire is one of 48 designated Local Nature Recovery Strategy Areas (LNRS) covering the whole of England. Responsibility for drawing up and delivering the strategy led by the County Council, along with key partners and stakeholders including the Borough Council. The Fields in Trust proposal contributes positively to the aims of the LNRS for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, the draft of which will go out for consultation during the summer.
- 4.3** Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security, is Natural England's strategic direction for 2025 – 2030. This strategy recognises that nature underpins our nation's growth, economy, health, and security. There is therefore a need to invest in Nature to maximise the full range of benefits it provides, and we depend upon.

### **5. Options Considered**

- 5.1 There have been two options considered for these sites, one of which was to leave the sites as they are currently classified with the risks that these might be changed at some point in the future, or to try and protect the sites in perpetuity through a legal process that establishes this. The added protection that Fields in Trust provides has therefore been selected.

## **6. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Environment Act 2021 includes several aspects which the Fields in Trust proposal will support.
- 6.2 Local authorities are now legally required to consider actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity and set and deliver biodiversity objectives. This supports long-term protection of parks and green spaces.
- 6.3 Environmental Improvement Plans (EIPs) mandate national and local plans to improve access to nature and enhance green infrastructure. These plans help councils prioritise and invest in protected green spaces.
- 6.4 New developments must deliver a net gain in biodiversity. This creates opportunities to safeguard and expand protected areas through planning obligations.
- 6.5 Landowners can enter into legally binding agreements to conserve land. Fields in Trust may use these covenants to secure long-term protection for parks and recreational land.
- 6.6 Aligning local planning and environmental strategies with the Act can strengthen partnerships with Fields in Trust. Councils can use the Act's provisions to secure funding, legal protection, and community support for green space initiatives.
- 6.7 Any new or emerging legal or statutory implications will be considered further prior to legal sign off.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 It is considered that there are only positive equality impacts because of the recommendations of this report as the purpose of the report / exercise as protecting green and open space will benefit the whole community.

## **8. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are financial and resource implications associated with this report.
- 8.2 The Council will be required to enter a restriction and notice to the registered title to each site selected. The Land Registry fee for up to three sites / titles is £80. Given that we shall be looking at 88 sites the estimate for the Sites for Consideration will be £2,400 in Land Registry costs in addition to necessary legal and property officer costs.
- 8.3 There will be costs associated with the Sandy Lane Inquiry but these are estimated to be minimal and should not exceed £5,000.

## **9 Major Risks & Mitigation**

- 9.1 There are no major risks to this proposal other than the sites not being accepted into the Fields in Trust classification.

## 10 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



## 11 One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

- According to Natural England 'the current value of Nature to the economy is estimated to be over £1.8 trillion. Putting Nature at the heart of new housing, infrastructure and renewable energy projects attracts greater investment and builds in resilience to climate change. Economic growth cannot be achieved without a thriving natural environment.'
- They go on further to state, 'The future health and wellbeing of our society is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Time spent in contact with Nature improves people's mental and physical health. This reduces the burden on the health system and promotes increased economic activity, providing more than £400 billion in expected health benefits into the future.' The fields in Trust proposals fully support the importance of the Councils green open spaces and the benefits they provide. One Digital Council

One Sustainable Council ☒

- The Council is committed to facilitating the boroughs journey to net zero by 2050, and 2030 for its own operations. The importance of the Councils green spaces and the works undertaken with its Borough tree Strategy and Grassland management strategy highlight the importance of these green spaces to protection of the Boroughs environment. Furthermore, green spaces are a proven asset in terms of citizens health and wellbeing, providing valuable space for leisure recreation, and relaxation.

## 12 Key Decision Information

- 12.1 This is a key decision due to the value of funding being granted to the Council and its multi-ward impact.

## 13 Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 13.1 Urban Tree Planting Strategy Phase 6 approved by Cabinet in June 2024.

## 14 List of Appendices

- 14.1 Appendix 1 – List of sites proposed for Fields in Trust status

## 15 Background Papers

- 15.1 None