

Norton St Philip Parish Council
c/o The Parish Clerk
81 Studland Park
Westbury
Wiltshire
BA13 3HN

6 September 2024

Dear Parish Councillors

**Objection to the Proposed Designation of Our Back Garden as an Important Greenspace –
Comments on the 2024 Regulation 14 Version of the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan (NSP NP)
dated 24 August 2024**

We are writing to formally object to the proposal to designate our back garden at The Barton, The Barton, Norton St Philip, BA2 7NE as an important greenspace within the 2024 Regulation 14 Version of the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan (NSP NP) dated 24 August 2024 and to ask that you remove it. Our further detailed comments on the NSP NP are attached.

1. Private Property Rights

First and foremost, our residential back garden is private property, intended for the personal use and enjoyment of our family and us. Designating it as an important greenspace could potentially impose restrictions on how we use and manage our garden, infringing upon our rights as homeowners. This designation could limit our ability to make necessary changes or improvements to the property in the future, which is an unreasonable burden for a private homeowner.

2. No Public Access or Benefit

The garden in question is neither special, significant nor accessible to the public, and as such, it does not provide a direct benefit to the wider community. Whilst we appreciate the value of preserving green spaces, the designation of a private residential garden that is not publicly accessible and difficult if not impossible to view over or through the high hedges and trees that surround it, does not seem to align with the intended goals of public greenspace policies. There are numerous countryside walking routes, public parks and nature reserves in the area that serve the community's needs without impinging on our private property.

3. Existing Environmental Management

We want to emphasize that we already take great care in maintaining our garden to support local wildlife and the environment. We have implemented several eco-friendly practices, such as composting, planting native species, tree maintenance at considerable expense and creating habitats for birds and insects. However, we believe that these efforts should remain voluntary and within our control rather than being mandated by a formal designation that could lead to further regulatory oversight or obligations.

4. Conservation Area

Our back garden is wholly in the Norton St Philip Conservation Area. Neither evidence nor justification is given as to why it needs protection above and beyond that afforded to all land in the Conservation Area, especially when it is very close to the historic Grade II* Tudor dovecote and Grade II listed Manor Farmhouse.

5. Impact on Property Value and Usability

The designation of our garden as an important greenspace could negatively impact the value and usability of our property. Potential future buyers might be deterred by the prospect of purchasing a property with such a designation, which could be seen as a restriction on the flexibility to manage and enjoy the garden as they see fit.

6. Lack of Consultation and Justification

We are concerned about the lack of consultation with us as the property owners before this latest designation was proposed. Moreover, we request a clear, up-to-date and detailed explanation of the specific reasons for considering our garden for this designation, including any assessments or studies that were conducted to support this decision.

7. Impact on Our Mental Health

The contiguous and often parallel processes over the last 10 plus years of developing the various versions of the NSP NP and district level Local Plans has restricted our enjoyment of our property and impacted negatively on our mental health. We have spent countless stressful hours in unsuccessful attempts to extract evidence from the Parish and District Councils upon the rationale for designating our garden as a LGS and now as an important greenspace. We have also commented on multiple versions of both plans without ever receiving any reasoned and evidence-based justification for designating our residential back garden as LGS in the first instance and now as an important greenspace. Nor has anyone in authority been able to explain why the Parish Council are treating our garden differently to all bar one other residential gardens in the village. This latest attempt to label our garden as something other than what it is - an ordinary back garden to a private residence - is unreasonable, unfair and continues to impact negatively on our mental health and wellbeing.

In conclusion, whilst we support the broader goals of preserving green spaces within our community, we strongly believe that our private garden should not be designated as an important greenspace. We respectfully request that our property be excluded from this designation and that our objection be fully considered in the decision-making process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Yours faithfully,

Signed on original

CG and KJ Parsons

Attachment:

Specific comments on Appendix 2 to the Aug 2024 Reg 14 Consultation version of the NSP NP