

Statement of support for registering Jessel Green as a Village Green

Loughton is less than 12 miles from London and in the 17th century provided London residents, merchants and business people with a country retreat. The area continued to grow with the arrival of the first railway to Loughton in 1856, which was used by both residents wishing to travel to London and Londoners wishing to visit Loughton for day trips. It brought what today would be known as a “tourist boom” to the area of those wishing to enjoy the tranquillity and beauty of the area and Epping Forest.

In 1891 visits to the Forest were organised for poor East End children by the Ragged School where they stayed at the Shaftesbury Retreat. Their train fares were paid by Pearson’s Fresh Air Fund, a charity established in 1892 by the philanthropist Sir Arthur Pearson enabling disadvantaged children to take part in outdoor activities.¹ These visits continued until the 1930s. These visits could be a reason why in the post war years many Londoners chose to “self-select” at their local Housing Office and move to Loughton.

By 1914 Loughton had changed from a village to a residential town, though still a very small one as the preservation of Epping Forest (under the Epping Forest Act 1878) had prevented any expansion westward. To the east of the town much of the land was owned by J Whitaker Maitland, rector and lord of the manor, who at the time had no monetary need to sell the land and so any new building work continued at a slow pace. In 1921 the population of Loughton was little more than it had been in 1911. However, building resumed steadily between 1918 and 1939.²

In 1944 John Maitland sold 644 acres of land to the London County Council for the building of a housing estate. Since 1947, when the first resident moved in, the landscape was gradually transformed by the building of the Debden London County Council Estate, which occupies most of the area to the east of the old town.³

The Debden Estate was classed as an “Out-county” estate (see map Appendix 3) under the 1943/44 County of London Plan and Greater London Plan prepared by Professor (later Sir) Patrick Abercrombie, architect, town planner, landscape artist and member of the Garden City movement.

At the Plan’s heart was a desire for space and order for its people. Abercrombie recommended that for every 1,000 inhabitants there should be at least 4 acres of open green space (twice as many as before the war). Rural environments were being chosen to improve the physical and moral health of the population.⁴ Chapter 3 of the Plan began with Abercrombie giving a statement saying “*Adequate open space for both recreation and rest is a vital factor in maintaining and improving the health of the people*”.⁵ A map of the proposed estate and its facilities is provided (Appendix 4).

“London County Council Post-War Housing”, a book published in 1949 by the London County Council, stated that the “planning of the new estate was greatly influenced by the main physical features of the site, e.g. the existing roads, undulating levels, considerable number of good trees and the tree-lined stream traversing the southern area of the site from north to south”. Indeed the book mentions among open spaces provided for the estate “a low hill in the eastern area of the site”, which we consider refers to Jessel Green.

Only 12 of these “out-county” estates were built with an ethos to provide self-sufficient housing with schools, libraries, churches, industry and open spaces for children to play on. The designers

¹ <http://www.triposo.com/loc/Loughton/history>

² ‘Loughton: Introduction’, A History of the County of Essex: Volume 4: Ongar Hundred (1956), pp. 110-114. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=15593>

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⁴ <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/abercrombie-plan-1944>.

⁵ http://www.gardenvisit.com/landscape_architecture/london_landscape_architecture/landscape_planning_pos_public_open_space/abercrombie_plan_chapter_open_space

also preserved as many of the trees as they could to retain a rural feel, working around the trees, rather than have the trees destroyed to make way for development.

Loughton has a self-contained quality whilst maintaining excellent transport links with the capital and surrounding countryside. It remains popular as a residential area, not least because of the green spaces within the town offering a retreat from work and daily activity. Surprisingly, there are no parks in Loughton as such for recreation and enjoyment and that is why the protection of the local green areas is so important to local residents.

Site

The site, which is known as Jessel Green by 72% of people who replied to the evidence questionnaires, is bordered by Colebrook Lane, Jessel Drive, Burney Drive, Goldingham Avenue and Brady Avenue. It is a large open grassed area, gently sloping to the south east corner. No public right of way is designated on Jessel Green.

The site is accessed on foot through an unfenced perimeter. 93% of replies stated that they simply walked on to the land from the road and that it was open with no boundary. Over the period referred to in this application, and from some of the replies received, 100% of replies show that since the 1950s and during the time they had used the land, the general pattern of use had remained basically the same and continues today.

Lawful sports and pastimes

A number of lawful sports and pastimes take place on the land. Respondents answered standard questions on the evidence form that they go onto this piece of land for:

Strolling	86%
Ball games	72%
Dog walking	45%
Community events	23%
Kite flying	51%
Picnics	49%

Additional comments showed that the land was also used by respondents for:

- cycling
- meeting friends
- remote control cars/airplanes
- exercising
- watching the sunset
- as a route home from school
- bird watching
- watching the space station and stars
- plane spotting (stacking area for Heathrow)
- golf practice
- taking grandchildren to play and football; and

- direct access to/from Trinity Church

When asked what activities they do or did take part in, in addition to the above, answers included:

- Queen's Jubilee
- fireworks
- bonfires
- climbing trees
- running/jogging; and
- socialising and playing when younger.

74% of the replies said their immediate family used the land, the majority used it for a number of the activities indicated above, as well as rounders and cricket.

When asked what activities were seen to take place on the land, the replies were as follows:

Children playing	100%
Rounders	44%
Dog walking	100%
Cricket	79%
Community celebrations	26%
Kite flying	81%
Bicycle riding	62%
Drawing and painting	19%
Fruit picking	7%
Football	86%
Picnicking	70%
Bonfire parties	46%
Team games	23%
Fetes	7%
Bird watching	21%
People walking	98%

They also indicated they had seen the following activities take place on the land:

- Frisbee throwing
- map reading the surrounding countryside; and
- nature studies of flora and fauna.

40% of respondents said they knew of community activities taking place on the land, with the majority of those saying that they participated in these. Again, events included fireworks, bonfire night parties, activities organised by local people at holiday time, football matches, school class fundays, school sports, tug of war between local pubs, fetes and in the past Coronation parties and the Queen's Jubilee.

Since 2001 Loughton Town Council has maintained the children's play area on the land although this is not included in the application site.

When asked if organisations used the land for sports or pastimes, 35% said that they had seen large groups on the green, schools and playgroups, football matches and local schools using the land for nature studies.

42% of people that replied said that seasonal activities took place on the land. Some people replied no/didn't know to this question, but then mentioned snow activities in other comments when asked why they went to this piece of land, or what took place on this piece of land. In addition to bonfire night parties, many mentioned sledging, snowballing and general playing in the snow as the slope of the green makes it ideal for these activities.

Supporting evidence by way of photos showing use of the land can be found in Appendix 5.

For a period of at least 20 years

69% of replies show that the land has been used in excess of 20 years, with several respondents having known and used the land since the 1950s. It is also apparent from the replies that the land is in continuing use, with 84% of replies indicating that the local inhabitants continue to use the land.

In 2013 Epping Forest District Council issued a licence for a series of summer events on Jessel Green (see Appendix 6)

Locality

When the Debden Estate was first developed, it offered residents a far higher standard of living than they were used to in London. They also made new friends, learned new skills at Loughton Hall and joined clubs and churches. For many young couples the most important factor keeping them in Debden was the healthy lifestyle for their children. There was also a strong community feel in Debden, helped by the number of activities on offer for children and their parents.

Loughton Town Council, created in 1996, took over a number of functions from Epping Forest District Council and developed its own activities to continue to build and strengthen the local community on the estate.

Attached is an email from a local estate agent (appendix 7) highlighting the distinctive character of Debden and its open spaces.

When asked what recognisable facilities were available to local inhabitants of the locality, the replies were as follows:

School catchment area, local school	93%
Area policeman/CSO	47%
Doctors surgery	81%
Community activities	44%
Neighbourhood watch	33%
A central feature	30%
Local shops	91%
Residents association	51%
Community centre	37%
Local church or place of worship	90%
Sports facility	39%

The area is served by the following junior and senior schools:

- Thomas Willingale, The Broadway
- John Fisher, Burney Drive;
- Hereward, Colebrook Lane;
- Debden Park High, Willingale Lane; and

- Davenant Foundation.

There is a large medical practice, Forest Practice, in Pyrles Lane.

The location is served by the following churches:

- Epping Forest Community Church in Grosvenor Drive
- Restore, which meets at Davenant school; and
- Trinity Church in Mannock Drive.

All churches offer community support for both children and adults through playgroups and clubs.

There are also three pubs serving the locality:

- The Cottage Loaf, Jessel Drive
- The Sir Winston Churchill in The Broadway; and
- The Gunmakers Arms in Chester Road

There are two Council noticeboards within the locality showing public notices and forthcoming events.

A significant number

From the evidence questionnaires it is clear that the land is used by a significant number of people with not only the majority of respondents using the land themselves, but 74% of their families using it as well. Comments include “my children have played there, learned to ride their bikes there and now my grandchildren use it for games”, “go there with grandchildren” and “collecting grandchildren from school”.

Inhabitants of the locality

100% of respondents considered themselves to be local residents when using the land.

81% of replies show the land is used on a weekly or more frequent basis

The land represents a welcome open space close to residential housing.

Appendix 8 shows the land and adjoining area, in which 99% of the respondents reside.

As of right

None of the respondents have indicated they had:

- never sought permission for activities on the land;
- never been given permission to go on the land; nor
- had been prevented from using the land.

This confirms the land has been used without secrecy. When asked about seeking permission to use the land, comments included; “not required”, “thought it was public”, and “always took for granted this was created for the purposes to which it is used”. All but two people (one said I don’t know, one said fence to stop parking) replied saying no attempt had been made by notice or

Appendix 2

fencing to discourage use of the land. All these replies indicate that the land has always been used as of right.