

Statement in Support of Application for Village Green Status for Norbriggs Field

It is submitted that the criteria as set out in s15(2) Commons Act 2006 are met, namely :

- (a) a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years; and .
- (b) they continue to do so at the time of the application.

The Area: Woodthorpe Village

Woodthorpe is one of the few true villages remaining in the area East of Chesterfield. It has a strong sense of identity. Its residents are a close knit community, with many multi-generational families having remained in the village for many years.

The residents of Woodthorpe care about their village and its future. They have clear established reasons for living in the Village, including strong community and family ties, the natural and green surroundings and good Schools. These reasons for living in Woodthorpe, and therefore the reasons why Woodthorpe succeeds as a cohesive and safe community, deserve protection.

The Field in Question

A significant number of inhabitants of Woodthorpe have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on land known as “the field”, “the Bottom Field” or “Norbriggs Field” for well in excess of 20 years.

Evidence suggests that the land was left in a will by a resident of the village (possibly a Mr Thompson formerly of 13 Norbriggs Road) , for recreational use. Such use for over 30 years is evidenced in statements and questionnaires attached to this application.

There are no signs or notices. There was once a sign with declared the area to be a “playing field”.

All parts of the field are used, including the grassed area to the East, the tarmacked court and the grassed area to the West, providing an area for dogs to be exercised away from children playing. The hard court provides an alternative surface for ball games, remote controlled cars, bikes and scooters.



View from West to East

Sources of Evidence

There are approximately 202 occupied houses in Woodthorpe.

The application is supported by the Woodthorpe Village Community Group, effectively a resident's association. The group conducted a survey of the population of Woodthorpe and Norbriggs in 2011, together with a petition. The petition was signed by 98% of the population of Woodthorpe and Norbriggs; this petition is clear in its support of the preservation of green land around Woodthorpe.

In addition to this, 20 households have provided questionnaire-based evidence of their use of the field and their observations of use by others.

There are further written statements in support attached.

Accessibility

The field is used freely without obstruction. It is accessible to all from the East, West and South sides by foot. There are no steps or other barriers to accessibility on the East and South. A gate to the East prohibits only vehicular access. It is accessed by Norbriggs Primary School via a gate as well as gaps in the school hedge. A stile is situated to the West, offering access to Nature Reserves and footpaths.

Fences and a gate were erected within the field itself in or around 2005 to divide it for safer use by Norbriggs Primary school. These do not prohibit or restrict access to the full area of the field. Such fences and gates have fallen into disrepair (see photograph overleaf)



View from East to West

Recreation

The field is used for recreational purposes in particular:

1. Dog training and walking on a daily basis

Adults and children alike use the field to exercise and train dogs. They are generally clean users of the field, a dog bin being available to them at the entrance. Some use the East end of the field alone, others use it all, or access the nature reserve to the West side.

2. Daily access to the Nature Reserve and public footpaths.

This includes pupils walking to Netherthorpe School as an alternative to using the main A619 route, groups of young people walking to access the nature reserves and paths beyond, dog walkers and ramblers accessing the nature reserves. The pastime of “Geocaching” also attracts people following co-ordinates by GPS to find “treasure” boxes planted in the area.



View from courts to “footpath” in use

3. Games

At least every weekend in all weathers, and in evenings families use the field for sports. These include all kinds of ball games with families and children getting together for organised and impromptu games.



4. Recreational Football and Cricket practice

Many groups use the field for such sports. In addition a soccer coaching school uses the field every Saturday (seasonally), providing a service for

many children. No express permission has been sought for this, save for the coach mentioning it to the Head of Norbriggs Primary School.

5. Cycling

Children generally ride bikes on the field and this includes small children learning to ride bicycles on the hard courts

6. Jogging

People have used the field to exercise including using the marked track (used by Norbriggs School for Sports Day) for training, and doing laps of the field.

7. Horses

In the recent past horses have been exercised on the field, and in the early 1980's horse shows/fetes were hosted there, as the photograph below shows.



8. Rights of Way

The questionnaire based evidence suggests that homes on Worksop Road benefit from a right of way across the field to their rear gardens.

The questionnaires submitted as evidence in support bear out the above.

Also included are occasional camping, sunbathing and other activities.

It is within the knowledge of the applicant and witnesses in support that the field has been used for these purposes for in excess of 30 years, with horse and dog shows being hosted there some 25-30 years ago. Photographic evidence attached supports this.

The field serves the village and wider area and should be preserved for future generations to be used in the same way.

Maintaining the field for recreational purposes promotes healthy living, enjoyable use of leisure time and active citizenship. Such green spaces are essential for health, quality of life and outdoor recreation.

The application carries the support of the Woodthorpe Village Community Group which represents the interests of the residents of Woodthorpe.

The criteria as set out in s15(2) Commons Act 2006 are clearly met, namely :

(a) a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years; and .

(b) they continue to do so at the time of the application.

Signed:

Sarah Mettam