

Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan 2031

Response to Consultation Representation by Charlbury Street Fair submitted by Steven Jones

We acknowledge the representation and objection made on behalf of the Charlbury Street Fair committee. We thank Charlbury Street Fair for their engagement with the Regulation 14 consultation process and for the matters raised which have been given careful consideration during the revision of the draft plan, ahead of submission to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).

The concern expressed over Wychwood Paddocks is recognised and is shared by several other residents. The value of the site as a school playing field is beyond doubt and is generally accepted as is the usefulness of the site as a car park for events such as Street Fair. The question is how this should be protected and whether designation as a Local Green Space (LGS) is the most appropriate approach. Careful thought has been given to this question and the reasons for non-designation in this case are clearly set out in Appendix E.3 (was Appendix F.3) of the draft plan. Following the strong representations from yourself and others, the site assessment was again reviewed against the criteria for designation but the decision not to designate was still judged to be appropriate in this case. Therefore, no further action was deemed to be necessary although the reasons for non-designation have been clarified further in Appendix E.3. Strong protection for the site as a playing field is already provided by paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and this situation is not affected by the recent academisation of the primary school. The usage of the site as an event car park, whilst important to the community, does not constitute a valid reason for LGS designation and such a designation would certainly not guarantee such usage, which would still require the permission of the landowner as at present. Also Policy ECT7 does clearly support the creation of additional car parking space near the town centre.

Our position regarding Wychwood Paddocks is in line with other neighbourhood plans where protection of school playing fields has been considered. It is also strongly supported by Oxfordshire County Council who own the land and recognise its value to the community but strongly oppose LGS designation. If circumstances change in the future (e.g. if the primary school were to be relocated to another site), the NPPF protection would still require demonstrable proof that the playing field facility was no longer required or that alternative (equivalent or better) facilities were being provided elsewhere. If this were to happen, such alternative facilities may also provide equivalent or better car parking facilities too!

It is our belief that the above NPPF provisions will adequately protect the Wychwood Paddocks site to support Charlbury Primary School but, in the unlikely situation of these circumstances changing, it would be important to be able to reassess the best use for site from the point of view of the community of Charlbury as a whole and that is the purpose of the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. For example, Policies CH1 & CH10 would seek to ensure that any development would meet identified needs of the community for affordable homes and/or homes to meet the needs of elderly or disabled residents.