

Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan 2031

Response to Consultation Representation by Blenheim Estate

We note the representation made on behalf of Blenheim Estate, as landowners of four sites designated as local green spaces (LGS) within the draft plan. We thank Blenheim Estate 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 WODC.

We recognise that Blenheim Estate does not support the LGS designations of sites LGS4 (Allotments adj. Wellington Cottages), LGS15 (Land West of Grammar School Hill), LGS18 (Land East of Hixet Wood) and LGS20 (Stream west of Hixet Wood) and note the arguments given against designation.

Following the Pre-submission (Regulation 14) Consultation of the draft Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan 2031 (CNP), held during autumn 2019, a detailed review of LGS designation proposals was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, including a reappraisal of the criteria for designation, where objections had been expressed by landowners or others. This review included the four sites mentioned above. The review concluded that designation of these sites was still justified and recommended that the designations be retained in the draft plan. This recommendation was approved by Charlbury Town Council. The reasons for the recommendation for these sites are set out below and this information is also summarised within the document “Addendum to LGS Assessments”, an additional supporting document available to view on the Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan website (www.charlburynp.org.uk).

LGS4 – Allotments adj. Wellington Cottages

Following reappraisal of the criteria for LGS designation Charlbury Town Council (CTC) remains of the opinion that LGS designation of this site is appropriate and justified for reasons set out in the LGS assessment (see supporting document “Local Green Space Assessments” accessible at www.charlburynp.org.uk) and consequently this has been retained within the revised CNP. In the opinion of CTC, the prominence of the site, the significance of the views across it towards Cornbury Park plus the importance of the allotments to members of the community as a local food source and for health and relaxation, justify the additional protection afforded by LGS designation.

LGS15 – Land West of Grammar School Hill

Following reappraisal of the criteria for LGS designation Charlbury Town Council (CTC) remains of the opinion that LGS designation of this site is appropriate for the reasons set out in detail within the site assessment (see supporting document “Local Green Space Assessments” accessible at www.charlburynp.org.uk) and consequently this has been retained within the revised CNP. Specifically the prominence of the site and its importance in defining the setting of the town and the Evenlode Valley are considered to be of sufficient importance to justify the additional protection provided by LGS designation.

LGS18 – Land East of Hixet Wood

Following reappraisal of the criteria for LGS designation Charlbury Town Council (CTC) remains of the opinion that LGS designation of this site is appropriate for the reasons set out in detail within the site assessment (see supporting document “Local Green Space Assessments” accessible at www.charlburynp.org.uk) and consequently this has been retained within the revised CNP. In particular, the site provides a natural break between the central area of the town and Hixet Wood and, due to the lie of the land, it offers glimpsed views across the open site which make an important contribution to the rural nature of the area. The site is also important for wildlife movement due to its proximity to the Sandford Slade Blue/Green Corridor.

LGS20 – Stream west of Hixet Wood

Following reappraisal of the criteria for LGS designation Charlbury Town Council (CTC) remains of the opinion that LGS designation of this site is appropriate for the reasons set out in detail within the site assessment (see supporting document “Local Green Space Assessments” accessible at www.charlburynp.org.uk) and consequently this has been retained within the revised CNP. Specifically, the importance of this site as a buffer for wildlife and as part of the Sandford Slade blue/green corridor are sufficient to justify the additional protection afforded by LGS designation in this case. We note the landowner’s comment that the site may possess some scope for sustainable development, enabling the land to make a positive contribution to the Charlbury Conservation Area. However, the designated site is limited to the strip of land bordering the stream for which the WODC SHELAA assessment 2016¹ stated: “Development on the site would result in the removal of thick vegetation, severely harming the character of the Conservation Area and street scene.” The special status of this site was also recognised in the approval by WODC for planning application 17/00889/FUL (condition 23 plus conditions 18, 19 and 20). This designation seeks to confirm this special status and clarify the area to be protected. We do not believe that appropriate work to enhance the management of this site for wildlife would be prevented by this designation.

¹ <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1577281/SHELAA-Update-2016-Revised-Appendix-3.pdf>