

Planning and Strategic Housing

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Date: 11 April 2022

Astrid Harvey
Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer
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Dear Astrid,

Woodstock Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2031

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the submission version of the Woodstock Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2031, published in January 2022.

In November 2021, I made some general observations, together with more specific comments on elements of the draft plan. At that time, I congratulated Woodstock Town Council on their 'clear, well-structured, well-written document which succinctly sets out the role of the plan and the justification for the sites considered to be worthy of becoming Local Green Space (LGS).' Since then, the document has been amended following consideration of the consultation feedback.

I am pleased to read that the Town Council found my comments and suggested amendments constructive and I note that virtually all of them have been incorporated into the submission draft of the plan.

I reiterate that the recognition of the need to keep the plan under periodic review is welcomed. In particular so that it remains 'current' and 'in conformity with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and national planning guidance ...', especially in light of the forthcoming review of the adopted Local Plan and the Government's emerging reforms of planning.

Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan, together with the Basic Conditions Statement, Consultation Statement and SEA/SA Screening Report, provide a clear, interesting and well-justified approach to the identification, demonstrable significance and policy for the eleven Local Green Spaces (LGS) in Woodstock.

In terms of the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, I only have a few points to highlight:

- I welcome that each of the comments I made on the draft Sections 2 and 3 has been taken on board.

- Policy WNDPI now provides an explanation on what the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for development should be and what could be a ‘supplementary and supporting function to the Local Green Space’. It is not essential that this clarification is within the policy and could form part of the supporting text instead.
- It is good see that the biodiversity value of the LGSs are given particular attention within Policy WNDPI. In addition to ‘welcoming’ improvements and enhancement, perhaps they could also be ‘encouraged’.
- At the draft stage, concern was expressed about the implications of LGS designation of New Road Recreation Ground, for example in terms of its potential restriction on the expansion of the primary school, located to the east of this site. I note, however, that Oxfordshire County Council has not raised this as an issue.
- LGS1 and LGS9 are cemeteries. Given that the main purpose of LGS designation is to provide an added layer of protection against development, how likely is it that a cemetery would come under pressure for redevelopment? Whilst accepting that the Green Lane Cemetery and Hensington Road Cemetery have considerable significance for the community and are demonstrably special green spaces, I continue to question whether cemeteries are suitable candidates for LGS designation.
- I welcome the removal of the existing play area and public open space adjacent to Rosamund Drive as a proposed LGS.

I hope these comments are useful to the examination process. Should you require any additional information or clarification please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Dunsell', written over a horizontal line.

Principal Planning Policy Officer