

# Weston-on-the-Green Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2031

---

## Initial Comments of the Independent Examiner

**Prepared by**

**JOHN SLATER BA(Hons), DMS, MRTPI**

**John Slater Planning Ltd**

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

## **Introductory Remarks**

1. As you will be aware, I have been appointed to carry out the focused re - examination of the Weston on the Green Neighbourhood Plan. I have carried out my initial review of the plan and the accompanying documents.
2. I visited the village on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. I spent the morning walking and driving around the village and in particular I walked the footpaths which cross the Schoolfield site. I also saw the Fir Tree Farm complex.
3. I have come to the view that, in view of the current climate, I am able to carry out this focussed examination, solely on the basis of the consideration of written material only. However, my conclusions of the issues would be assisted by responses to a number of questions which are pertinent to the issues before me. These are directed at the Parish Council, Cherwell District Council and also from the planning consultants acting on behalf of the landowners of the Schoolfield site, Lagan Homes.
4. I must stress that at this stage, I have not come to any conclusions whatsoever and that by asking specific questions, does not mean that I am in any way prejudging my considerations of the issues before me.

## **Regulation 16 Comments**

5. Firstly, I would like to offer the Parish Council the opportunity to respond to any of the comments made in the representations submitted as part of the recent post Decision Statement consultation.

## **Questions for Weston on the Green Parish Council**

6. Was there consideration given, to whether the Schoolfield, should be designated as a Local Green Space in view of its stated importance to the local community - if it was considered, what were the reasons why it was not pursued?
7. I have seen neighbourhood plans designate fields with remaining ridge and furrow features as non-designated heritage assets. Did the Steering Group consider conferring that status on the western side of Schoolfield?
8. Can the Parish Council offer a possible scenario illustrating the circumstances where the use of the Schoolfield as a passive recreational open space is likely to be achievable? Does the Parish Council have a view, as to whether its objective of protecting the grassland habitat, the protection of the ridge and furrow landscape alongside achieving full public access, beyond the rights of way that cross the site, could be justified, as part of a mixed-use allocation of a new open space alongside housing, which has been argued would be "rounding off the settlement"? This suggestion has been put forward by Pegasus Group in their representation dated May 2019 on behalf of Lagan Homes? Does the Parish Council have any comments to make on the Lagan Homes' commissioned Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Ecological Assessment of the Schoolfield site?

## Questions for Cherwell District Council

9. Is the District Council currently able to demonstrate a five - year housing land supply?
10. Does the District Council have a view as to whether the Fir Tree Farm (HELAA 229) could be allocated as a residential site, despite its inclusion in the Green Belt, under the provisions of paragraph 145g) of the NPPF? Is the allocation of the site as an employment site under saved Policy EMP1, an overriding consideration? Are the buildings on the site authorised for employment uses or are they used for agricultural purposes? Perhaps you could check the planning history and advise.
11. Can Cherwell District Council provide me with an update on its likely programme for reviewing its adopted Local Plan. I have seen the draft submission document - Partial Review – Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need and its major and minor modifications. Can you let me know what the likely date of adoption is? Furthermore, for the remainder of the district, beyond the areas adjacent to the City of Oxford, has any work been carried out on reviewing the overall Cherwell’s overall housing figures, in the light of the Standard Methodology? Will that require the reviewing of Green Belt boundaries and village envelopes? Is there a timetable for the review/ partial review of the adopted local plan, as a whole?
12. Is the LPA satisfied with the neighbourhood plan’s Calculated Housing Need Assessment, as set out on page 45 of the plan document which establishes a requirement of 38 new homes for the period 2017 – 2031? Or has Cherwell DC given an indicative figure for the neighbourhood plan area, under the provisions of paragraph 65 of the NPPF?
13. Having regard to Policy Villages 1, do you consider that the remainder of the stated village’s requirement – 18 dwellings, is likely to be deliverable on sites within the built-up limits of the village? I am assuming the built-up limits is the same as the definition of village confines set out in the Glossary on page 5. If the sites, were to come forward as windfall rather than allocations, would that then not count toward the 750 homes total, set out in Policy Villages 2?
14. Does the LPA have a view that a modified Policy C1 that *encourages* the preservation and management (of a large section) of Area B, “as a potential recreational open space commensurate with the lowland meadow” could be supported / delivered in conjunction with an 18-unit residential scheme?
15. What is the current figure for the number of new dwellings completed in the Category A villages within the local plan period as opposed to those that have planning permission.

## Questions for Pegasus Group on behalf of Lagan Homes

16. Can you confirm your client is still proposing a residential development of approximately 18 units on the eastern side of the Schoolfield site and whether that scheme would accord with the housing mix as set out in Policy H3 of the

neighbourhood plan and that it will deliver the appropriate percentage of affordable housing in line with Local Plan Policy BSC 3?

17. For the sake of clarity, could your client set out its intentions for the future ownership and management of the residual open space?

### Concluding Remarks

18. I am sending this note direct to Weston-on-the-Green Parish Council, as well as Cherwell District Council. I would be pleased if Christina Cherry would forward this document on to Ben Cook at the Pegasus Group. I would request that all parties' responses should be sent to me by 5 pm on **14<sup>th</sup> April 2020**.

19. I will be grateful, if a copy of this note and any subsequent responses are placed on the appropriate neighbourhood plan websites.

John Slater BA (Hons), DMS, MRTPI

John Slater Planning Ltd

Independent Examiner to the Weston-on-the-Green Neighbourhood Plan.

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020