

Woodstock

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2020 - 2031

DRAFT VERSION



WOODSTOCK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2020 – 2031

DRAFT VERSION

Woodstock Town Council
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<http://www.woodstock-tc.gov.uk/>

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Foreword

Dear Residents,

Text to be provided by WTC

Name

Position

1. Introduction

A new plan for Woodstock

- 1.1 This is the draft Neighbourhood Plan for Woodstock. It covers the entire area covered by the Town Council, as illustrated in Figure 1.
- 1.2 The purpose of neighbourhood planning is to give local people and businesses a much greater say in how the places they live and work should change and develop over time. Neighbourhood planning is designed to give local people a very real voice in shaping the look and feel of an area.
- 1.3 There is no set format for a Neighbourhood Plan, nor what it should include, though policies in it should relate to land use and development. Good practice advice is that such plans should really focus on the key issues and challenges within an area, which are not already addressed through national or local policy, and where the local community can affect very real change.
- 1.4 This Neighbourhood Plan for Woodstock, which covers the period to 2031¹, has a singular focus on the protection of green and open spaces within the neighbourhood area for current and future generations, which it aims to achieve through the designation of 'Local Green Spaces'.
- 1.5 Woodstock was formally designated as an area for neighbourhood planning purposes in January 2020². The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee has sought the views of the wider community, as well as landowners, through the process of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan, seeking feedback on the proposed Local Green Space Designations contained within it.
- 1.6 The Plan is now at the draft consultation stage. Following this, and consideration of comments received, it will be submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council for the purposes of independent examination. Subject to the outcomes of the examination a referendum will be then be held, where all people of voting age residing in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be able to cast a vote on whether they think the Neighbourhood Plan should be brought into force ('made'). If more than 50% of those people who turnout vote 'yes', the Neighbourhood Plan will be used to help shape planning decisions and applications in Woodstock.

¹ This aligns with the period covered by the existing West Oxfordshire Local Plan.

² The Localism Act 2011 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>) gave communities the power to develop neighbourhood plans, to be progressed by Town and Parish councils, or neighbourhood forums, as opposed to the local authority.



Figure 1: The designated Neighbourhood Plan area for Woodstock

Structure of the plan

- 1.7 Following this introduction, the draft Neighbourhood Plan comprises four further sections. These are:
- Section 2: 'Setting the Scene', presents the context for the Neighbourhood Plan, providing an overview of the area today and the policy framework within which the Neighbourhood Plan sits.
 - Section 3: 'Local Green Spaces', introduces the concept of Local Green Space designations, how and when it can be used, as well as an overview of key documents and resources that have informed the designation of Local Green Spaces in this Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Sections 4: 'Policies', presents the Local Green Space policies for Woodstock and includes a discussion of each of the sites identified for designation.
 - Section 5: 'Next steps', outlines the current stage in the plan making process, how to respond to the draft Plan, and what the future steps in the process are.

Reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.8 Notwithstanding the defined period of the Neighbourhood Plan to 2031, it is recognised that, with further changes to and review of the Local Plan likely (and, indeed, to national guidance), the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed periodically. This will enable the Neighbourhood Plan to remain 'current' and in conformity with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and national planning guidance (whether that is the National Planning Policy Framework or a replacement of this as proposed by the Planning White Paper).

2. Setting the scene

The neighbourhood plan area

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the entire parish of Woodstock. The main settlement – Woodstock – is located in the south of the Parish, with the boundary extending northwards to include Old Woodstock, a smaller settlement. The two are separated by the River Glyme, a tributary that runs north to south through the Parish.
- 2.2 The main access routes into the Town is Oxford Road from the South and Manor Road from the North. These merge to become Oxford Street, off of which you can find the High Street, the town's main thoroughfare. On these two streets you can find many of the communities' main amenities and facilities including Woodstock Surgery, the Co-operative, The Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock Town Hall, The Post Office and the Macdonald Bear Hotel. Additional access to the town can be obtained from the east via Banbury Road. High through traffic levels (particularly lorries using the A44) have long been an issue for the town³.
- 2.3 Woodstock is a historic town of national renown. The old part of Woodstock is a well-preserved medieval town, much of which is covered by a Conservation Area in which there are almost 200 listed buildings. Residential estates have been added to the historic core of the town since the 1930s, and particularly so in the 1950s and 1960s. More recent development has been more limited, although, in the last fifteen years, new residential development to the east of the town adjacent to Marlborough School has taken place.
- 2.4 To the north of Woodstock, the landscape is rural in character. Glyme Valley, which divides the two settlements, is attractive and currently characterised by semi-enclosed valley-side farmland and open limestone wolds farmland. Further north is larger scale open arable farmland, with few trees and a weak hedgerow structure⁴.
- 2.5 Land to the east of Woodstock is largely characterised by open limestone wolds farmland. There is some ribbon development along Banbury Road, but the rural edge

³ West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan/>

⁴ West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment 1998 [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-evidence-base/>

is currently largely unspoilt. The former railway line that runs east to west has become a strong landscape feature⁵.

- 2.6 The open limestone wolds farmland continues to the south where it is very flat, with medium to large scale farmland. This farmland is largely unspoilt by urban influences as there is a strong boundary between the urban edge and the more rural land uses. This boundary is slightly less clear with regard to the school because of its playing fields, fences and lighting⁶.
- 2.7 To the west of the Parish lies Blenheim Estate and Blenheim Palace. Blenheim Palace and its parkland was inscribed as a World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1987. In addition to this, it is also considered a National Heritage Landscape because of its outstanding historic and architectural interest. The park is a well-defined and contained landscape with limited inter-visibility with its wider agricultural setting (including Woodstock)⁷.
- 2.8 Blenheim Palace is the District's largest visitor attraction and a major contributor to the local economy. As such, tourism is an important part of Woodstock's livelihood and character, with several pubs, restaurants, hotels and tea shops populating the town to support the industry⁸.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan

- 2.9 Neighbourhood Plans must be prepared in line with national guidance and legislation including the Localism Act (2011), the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012)⁹, the Neighbourhood Planning Act, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 2.10 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan¹⁰. The development plan for Woodstock is the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which was adopted by West Oxfordshire District Council in 2018 and sets out the overall planning framework for the district from 2011 to 2031.
- 2.11 Due to its 'very good range of services and facilities given its size' and its good accessibility to and from Oxford, the Local Plan states that Woodstock can

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

⁷ Blenheim World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan 2017. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-evidence-base/>

⁸ West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan/>

⁹ Updated in 2015 and 2016

¹⁰ See Para 29 / Footnote 16, MHCLG, February 2019, NPPF

accommodate a reasonable scale of development throughout the plan period. The Local Plan allocates three (non-strategic) sites in Woodstock for a total housing allocation of 600 homes:

- EW3 Land east of Woodstock to accommodate 300 homes north of the A44 Oxford Road. This is a greenfield site on the south eastern edge of Woodstock currently in agricultural use. The site immediately adjoins existing residential development to the west and is bordered to the north by sports pitches associated with the Marlborough School.
- EW4 Land north of Hill Rise, Woodstock to accommodate around 120 dwellings. This is a greenfield site located on the northern approach into Woodstock along the A44 Manor Road. It adjoins existing development at Hill Rise and Vanbrugh Close to the west and south.
- EW5: Land north of Banbury Road, Woodstock to accommodate 180 homes. This is a greenfield site located on the northern edge of Woodstock between Green Lane and Banbury Road. The site is currently in agricultural use.

2.12 The Local Plan sets out a number of objectives associated with environmental and heritage assets, including open space. Of particular importance to the protection of Woodstock's environmental and heritage assets is the following:

- CO14: Conserve and enhance the character and significance of West Oxfordshire's high quality natural, historic and cultural environment – including its geodiversity, landscape, biodiversity, heritage and arts – recognising and promoting their wider contribution to people's quality of life and social and economic well-being both within the District and beyond.

2.13 This objective is supported by a number of Local Plan policies including:

- Policy EH2: Landscape Character: *The quality, character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire's natural environment, including its landscape, cultural and historic value, tranquillity, geology, countryside, soil and biodiversity, will be conserved and enhanced.'*
- Policy EH3: Biodiversity and geodiversity: *The biodiversity of West Oxfordshire shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity and minimise impacts on geodiversity.'*
- Policy EH4: Public realm and green infrastructure: *The existing areas of public space and green infrastructure of West Oxfordshire will be protected and enhanced for their multi-functional role, including their biodiversity,*

recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for the contribution they make towards combating climate change.'

- Policy EH5: Sport, recreation and children's play: *'New development should not result in the loss of open space, sports and recreational buildings and land unless up to date assessment shows the asset is surplus to requirements or the need for and benefits of the alternative land use clearly outweigh the loss and equivalent replacement provision is made.'*

- 2.14 With the scale of growth proposed in Woodstock in mind, and the recognised importance of green spaces, this Neighbourhood Plan focuses on designating important local green spaces of significance to the community, and which can be enjoyed by existing and new residents alike.
- 2.15 The Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by the Local Plan documents and the suite of supporting material providing evidence to this, all of which can be accessed via the West Oxfordshire Council website¹¹.

Woodstock Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- 2.16 In February 2019, Woodstock Town Council and Blenheim Estate commissioned a Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan to help address future infrastructure needs for the town in light of the new housing sites brought forwards in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.
- 2.17 The aim of the Plan was to identify the 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure needs within Woodstock, so that it can continue to prosper; ensure proposed developments preserve and enhance the special character of the existing town; ensure new communities are integrated into the town; and recommend how 'projects and priorities' identified by the local community can be achieved.
- 2.18 Amongst priorities raised during consultation with the local community, the protection and enhancement of green and open spaces were raised as a key concern, particularly the status of the Recreation Ground. In the community survey distributed, providing more green spaces was rated as 4.1 out of 5 in terms of importance by 510 respondents, while keeping the Woodstock FC site (Recreation Ground) as a green space was rated as 4.6 out of 5 by 508 respondents.
- 2.19 Though concerns were raised about the impact of planned development, there was support to consider these issues on a 'town-wide' basis, with discussions raised

¹¹ See: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/>

regarding the environment and the climate crisis dominating community events. Environmental and low carbon improvements, including biodiversity, wildlife habitats and green spaces, was placed on the Priority List relating to Section 106 developer contributions. Following from this, the Town Council has prepared this Neighbourhood Plan which has a focus on designating important Local Green Spaces in Woodstock for protection.

3. Local Green Spaces

The importance of green space

- 3.1 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (Paragraph 5) highlights the importance of green infrastructure for communities, referencing benefits such as *'enhanced well-being, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling and the management of flood risk'*.
- 3.2 Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place (Paragraph 6). It can also help to improve the health and well-being of a community, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to exercise, interact with one another experience nature, get involved in their community through activities like food growing and gardening, all of which bring physical and mental health benefits (Paragraph 6).
- 3.3 In their research project *'Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces,'* Fields in Trust, the independent charity working to secure the protection of parks and green spaces at both the local and national level, quantified the 'Wellbeing Value' of such spaces. They established that an individual would need to be compensated by £974 a year to replace the life satisfaction they would have gained from using their local park or green space. Equally, parks and green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year based solely on a reduction in GP visits¹².
- 3.4 Such spaces are particularly important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. With access to gyms, sports facilities, cafés, shops and other community facilities restricted, open spaces have become hugely important sites where people can exercise and interact with one another in a socially distanced and safe environment.¹³ Fields in Trust Guidance has been to ensure that such spaces remain open and accessible, recognising their role in community well-being, now more than ever¹⁴.

¹² Fields in Trust – Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces [ONLINE]. Available at:

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/research>

¹³ LSE London Blog – Valuing London's urban green space in a time of crisis – and in everyday life [ONLINE]. Available at:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lse/london/valuing-londons-urban-green-space-in-a-time-of-crisis-and-in-everyday-life/>

¹⁴ Fields in Trust – Management of green spaces during Covid-19 [ONLINE] Available at:

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/knowledge-base/management-of-green-spaces-during-covid-19>

National Guidance

- 3.5 Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces which are of importance to the local community. The NPPF states that Local Green Spaces should only be designated where the green space is:
- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
 - b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
 - c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.¹⁵*
- 3.6 It is important to note that whilst designation affords the green space similar policy protection to Green Belt, it does not place any new restrictions or obligations on landowners. Management of the land remains the responsibility of the landowner although, with the agreement of the landowner, there may be opportunities that can be explored which allow the local community to become more involved in the management of the space. Furthermore, designation does not confer any rights of access over what exists at present.
- 3.7 Appendix 2 of this Neighbourhood Plan includes extracts from Planning Practice Guidance providing more information on the designation of sites as Local Green Spaces.

Open Space & Green Infrastructure

- 3.8 The West Oxfordshire District Council Open Space Study 2008¹⁶ reports that most of the open space in Woodstock is dominated by institutional sports grounds, found to the east of the town. This includes the Marlborough School Playing Field and the space behind Woodstock Church of England Primary School. Consequently, the study notes that there is very little public open space in Woodstock.
- 3.9 Other types of open space in Woodstock include outdoor sports facilities (non-institutional) in the form of the New Road Recreation Ground and Woodstock Bowls & Tennis Club. There is provision for children and young people in the form of New

¹⁵ Para 100, MHCLG, February 2019, NPPF

¹⁶ West Oxfordshire Open Space Study 2008 [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-evidence-base/> It should be noted that the 2013 version of the Open Space study only focusses on three areas across the district and does not include Woodstock in this.

Road Playground and Old Woodstock Play Area (see figure x for full map of open space in Woodstock).

- 3.10 The largest parcel of open space exists in the form of the Watermeadows. This is a unique feature in the heart of the parish and provides a valuable habitat for birds, small mammals and plants. Granted to the town in a charter of King Henry VI in 1453, the Meadows form low-lying ground approximately five hectares in extent between Old and New Woodstock in the valley of the River Glyme. The river flows along the northern boundary of the Meadows but a second, smaller channel flows through the middle of the site.
- 3.11 The Meadows are a popular local area used by many for recreational activities; access is gained at four points and a network of footpaths supplemented by footbridges, stiles and kissing gates allow visitors to navigate the wetlands. Due to their low level, the meadows regularly flood during periods of heavy rain¹⁷. The Watermeadows are in the process of being designated formally as a Local Nature Reserve.
- 3.12 The Meadows do not form part of a local authority conservation area, there are no known sites of scheduled historic or archaeological interest and there are no known statutory nature conservation designations. The 2013 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre¹⁸ report notes that the site resembles defined habitat types known as Lowland Fen and Wet Woodland. Both are important local biodiversity action plan priority habitats. Of the two, Lowland Fen is relatively rare in Oxfordshire and considered the priority for conservation action.
- 3.13 There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the Parish, including those that run through the Watermeadows. Others include a footpath running parallel to the New Road Recreation Ground, connecting Princes Ride with Recreation Road, a footpath that runs south west-to-north east across the field east of Green Lane, and a footpath that runs between Banbury Road and the woodland strip that marks the boundary between West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District.
- 3.14 In 2005, the Town Council acquired the old railway line that was once the Blenheim and Woodstock branch line, a four mile stretch of railway that linked Kidlington and Woodstock. The line was closed in 1954 and had lain abandoned since. Under the leadership of the Oxfordshire County Council, the part of the line that is visible within Woodstock, from Verenia Court out to the eastern boundary of the parish (and district), has been transformed into a linear nature reserve that has become an important sanctuary to local wildlife including butterflies, birds, reptiles and orchids.

¹⁷ A Water Management Plan for Woodstock Water Meadows 2014 [ONLINE]. Available at: http://www.woodstock-tc.gov.uk/environment.html#The_Water_Meadows

¹⁸ Thames Valley Environmental Records 2013.

The site is also a popular 'wild' trail amongst local dog walkers and ramblers. There are no known statutory conservation designations on this site.

4. Policies

Process

- 4.1 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan presents the sites that have been designated as Local Green Spaces. A long list of sites were initially identified by the Town Council, reflecting previous work and Local Plan consultations, as well as consultation on the Town Council's 'Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan'. These were subject to consultation with landowners, seeking their feedback on proposed designations, and with the wider community, involving production of display material and use of surveys. The surveys sought to understand the significance of the sites, how they are used and what for. The proposed sites have all been considered against the criteria for designation outlined in the NPPF and in supporting guidance, including that published by Locality¹⁹.

Designations

- 4.2 This section presents the Local Green Spaces designated through this Neighbourhood Plan, as outlined in Policy WNP LGS 1 and in subsequent supporting text. Respondents to the consultation highlighted the importance of the designations, stating:
- *"These green areas have all been around for a long time and offer places for rest, recreation, getting outdoors and boosting one's mental health"*
 - *"All are significantly important green spaces to all in Woodstock, I utilise most of the green spaces everyday while out walking with my dogs."*
 - *"The green spaces are the lungs of the town"*
 - *"Woodstock is lucky to be surrounded by tranquil spaces on our doorstep. We should be proud of our green spaces, or we are no different to any other local town. Proximity to green spaces is important and the further out these get due to housing development means they are used less by the long-standing residents as Woodstock expands outwards. We must protect these spaces"*
 - *"Each of these spaces are what makes Woodstock such a special place, green, historical and family friendly, with an amazing array of wildlife. These need to remain."*

¹⁹ <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/>

Policy WNP LGS1: Local Green Space Designations

The following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces, as identified on Figure 2:

- 1) The Oxfordshire Museum
- 2) Memorial Garden
- 3) Marlborough School Playing Field
- 4) Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club
- 5) New Road Playground
- 6) New Road Recreation Ground
- 7) OWL Nature Reserve
- 8) Green Lane Cemetery
- 9) Green Lane Allotments
- 10) Watermeadows
- 11) Old Woodstock Play Area
- 12) Community Orchard and Community Woodland
- 13) Hensington Road Cemetery

Planning applications for development on the Local Green Space Designations will not be permitted unless exception circumstances can be demonstrated and where the proposed development performs a supplementary and supporting function to the Local Green Space.

- 4.3 Each of the Local Green Space Designations are discussed further in the following sections.

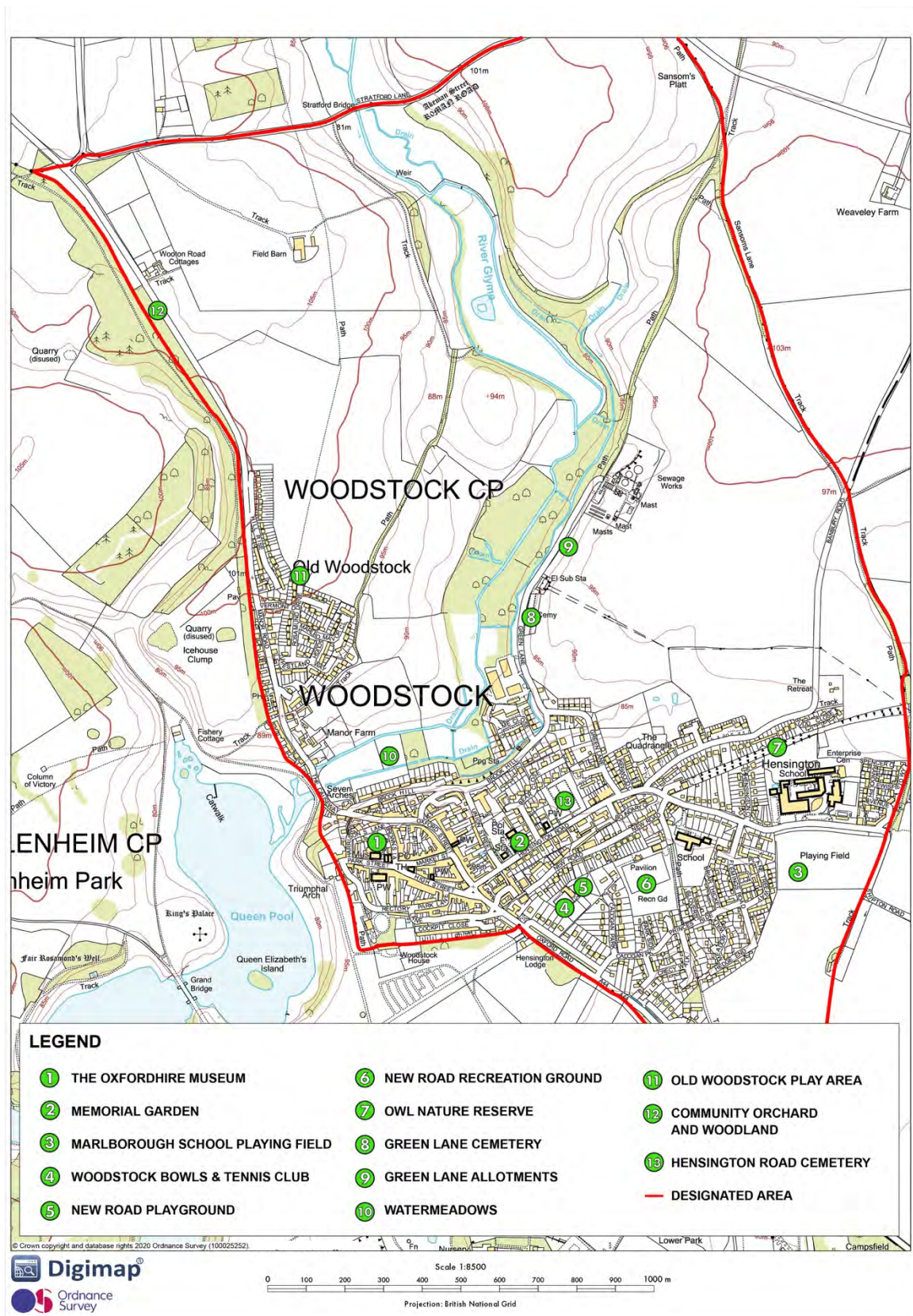


Figure 2: Location of Local Green Space Designations in Woodstock

(1) The Oxfordshire Museum:

"An oasis in the middle of town" (Consultation comment)

- 4.4 The Oxfordshire Museum on Park Street has within it a landscaped garden, an outdoor area for museum visitors with benches and walkways. The garden is an important part of the museum, attracting local residents and visitors alike for its tranquillity and historic significance; as such, the site is demonstrably special to the local community. The site does not already have planning permission for development and it sits in the heart of Woodstock. Though within the Woodstock Conservation Area, this does not completely preclude the site from development and would benefit from further protection through designation. Respondents to consultation indicated that they used the space on a regular basis, for relaxation and socialising. It is an area of tranquillity and historically significant.



Figure 3: The Oxfordshire Museum garden LGS (looking across to The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum)

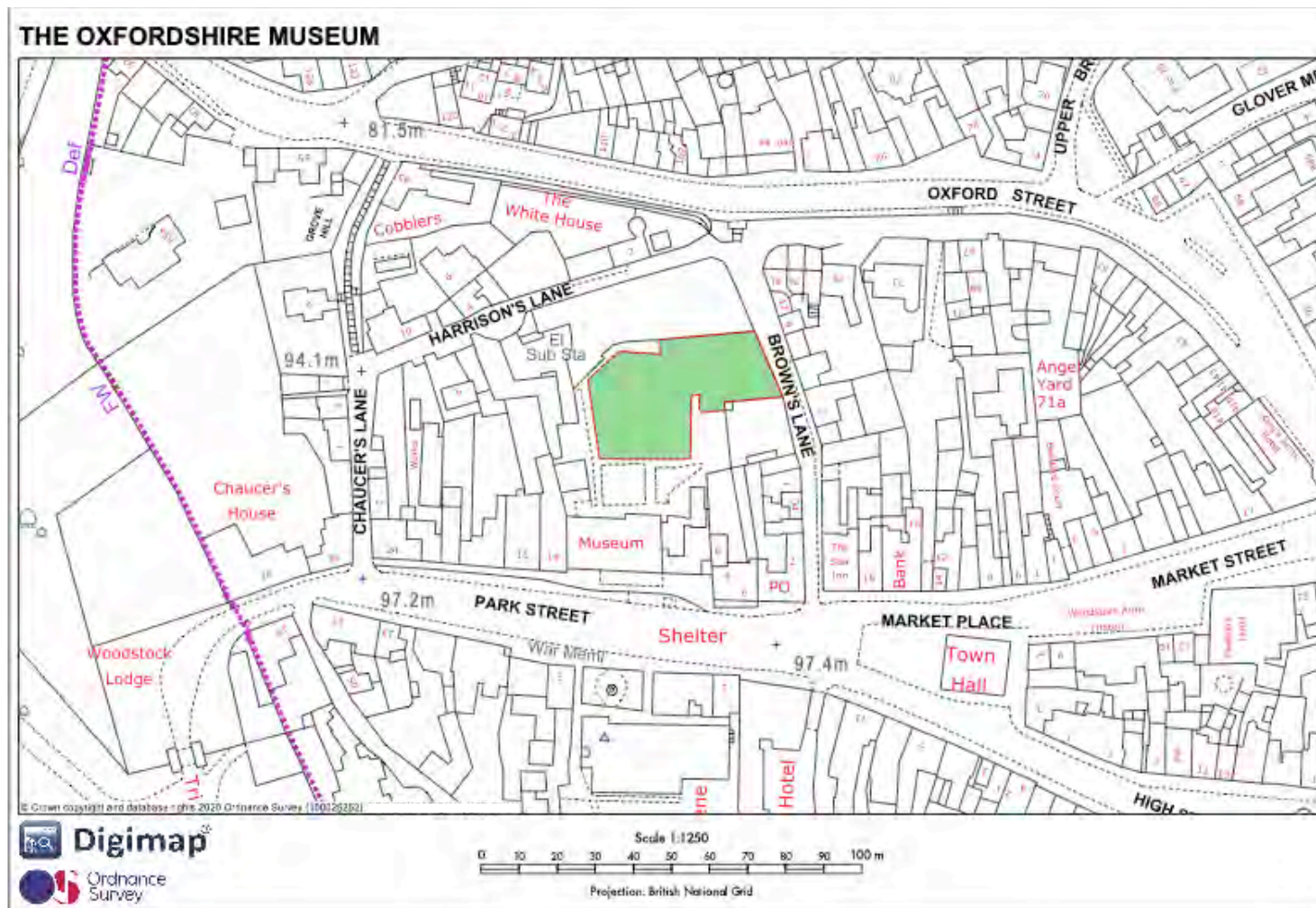


Figure 4: The Oxfordshire Museum LGS

(2) The Memorial Garden:

"As the site of the old Union Workhouse it should be commemorated in some way (perhaps a sculpture)" (Consultation comment)

- 4.5 The Memorial Garden on Hensington Road is one of the few publicly accessible gardens in Woodstock, providing a quiet and tranquil setting for local residents. Containing well-tended flower beds, benches and a network of stone paths, it is in good condition and demonstrably special to the local community. The site does not have any existing protection and would benefit from local green space (LGS) designation. There is no existing planning permission for development and the site is within walking distance for most of the local community. Respondents to the public consultation indicated that the Memorial Garden is valued as a place for relaxation, to enjoy wildlife and undertake informal exercise. Improvements to the quality of the space would be welcome.



Figure 5: Memorial Garden LGS

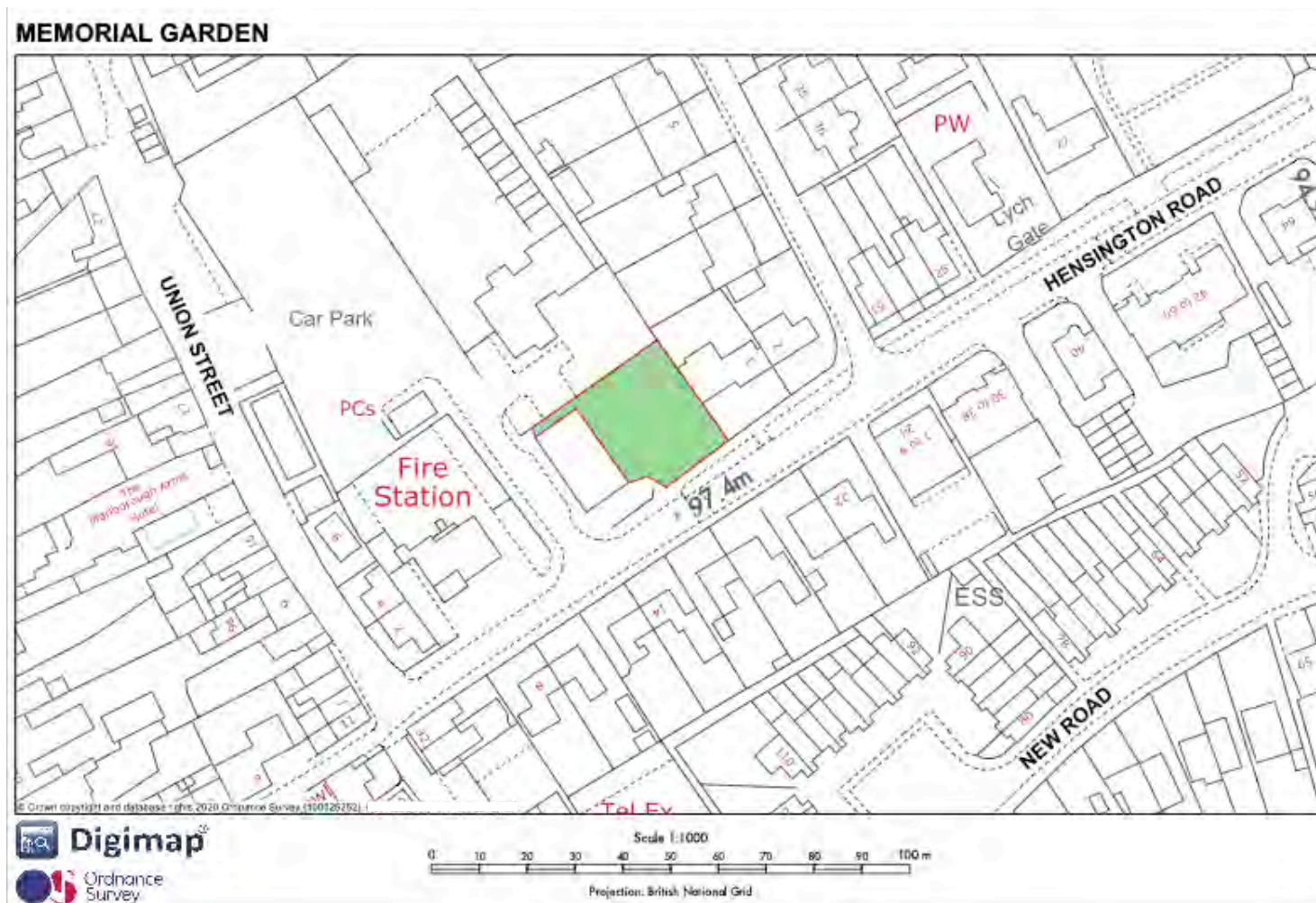


Figure 6: Memorial Garden LGS

(3) Marlborough School Playing Field:

- 4.6 Marlborough School Playing Field provides formal recreational space for the students of the connected school, containing a football pitch and additional open space. Historically the site has been well used by the local community and continues to be soon, particularly for dog walking and as a recreational space for children. With very little Public Open Space within Woodstock compared to the rest of the local authority (Open Space Study 2008), such spaces are particularly valuable to the local community. With development coming forwards to the East and to the south (EW3), the school playing field is vulnerable to future development and in need of the protection provided by local green space designation. Respondents to consultation highlighted the recreational value of the Playing Field, as well as valuing the tranquillity of the space. It is visited regularly for the purposes of informal exercise, children's play, organised sport and relaxation and has been for many years. In the 1998 appraisal, to which 73% of all households in Woodstock responded, 55% said the school fields are important and a further 24% said they're "nice to have", demonstrating the importance attached to the playing field by the community.



Figure 7: Marlborough School Playing Field LGS

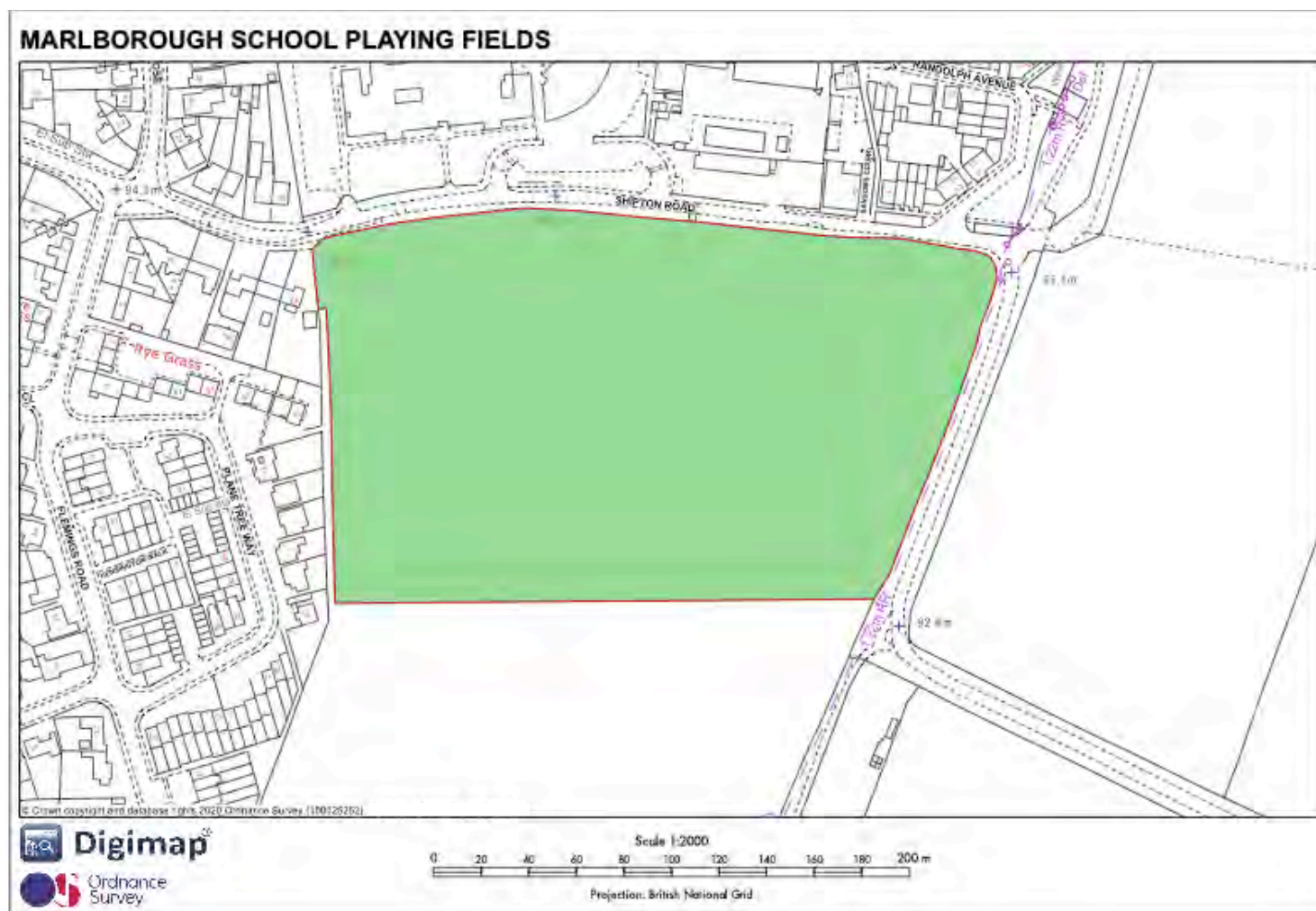


Figure 8: Marlborough School Playing Field LGS

(4) Woodstock Bowls & Tennis Club:

- 4.7 The Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club off Cadogan Park not only provides formal recreational space in the form of tennis courts and a six-rink bowling green but also acts as a community social hub. Such spaces are important for maintaining community well-being and should be protected. Local Plan Policy E5 protects sports and recreational buildings unless shown to be surplus to requirements; however, the site itself has no designations and the additional protection will help ensure the space remains protected in the event that further recreational space is provided. There is no planning permission on the site and the space is within close proximity to the community it serves. Respondents to consultation highlighted the importance of the Bowls and Tennis Club as a place for recreation and an opportunity for participating in organised sport. The site is owned by the Town Council and leased to the Bowls and Tennis Club.



Figure 9: Woodstock Bowls & Tennis Club LGS



Figure 10: Woodstock Bowls & Tennis Club LGS

(5) New Road Playground:

- 4.8 Adjoining Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club, the New Road Playground contains various recreational infrastructure for young children, including a zip wire, swings and picnic benches. The earlier Open Space Study (2008) noted that the site is an important recreational space for parents of young children as there are no other playgrounds within the main area of the town. There is no planning permission for development on the site and currently no other policy designations that give it protection. Located in the heart of the town, it fits the criteria for Local Green Space designation and would benefit from the protection it grants. Respondents to consultation indicated that the Playground is used on a regular basis by residents, primarily for play, but also for informal exercise and recreation. The site is owned by the Town Council.



Figure 11: New Road Playground LGS



Figure 12: New Road Playground LGS

(6) New Road Recreation Ground:

"The only large recreational space near the town centre." (Consultation comment)

- 4.9 New Road Recreation Ground is the football ground for Woodstock Town FC. The football pitch is currently cordoned off, but the site contains additional green space for more informal recreational activities (dog walkers, playing football); consequently, it is one of the few public open spaces accessible within Woodstock and one of just three areas with outdoor sports facilities (Open Space Study 2008). Local Plan Policy E5 grants the attached youth centre and club house protection but the green space itself is largely unprotected. The owner of the site (Blenheim Estate) has previously expressed interest in building on the site but this has not progressed. The LGS designation would grant the site important additional protection. Respondents to consultation suggested that the Recreation Ground is used on a regular basis, mainly for exercise, but also for play and relaxation. The site plays such a central role in the town, as a social and recreational hub, that residents have expressed a desire to have it designated as a town green, reflecting the importance of the site for recreation in the town, dating back over many years. In addition to designation as a Local Green Space consideration will be given to listing the site as an Asset of Community Value.



Figure 13: New Road Recreation Ground LGS

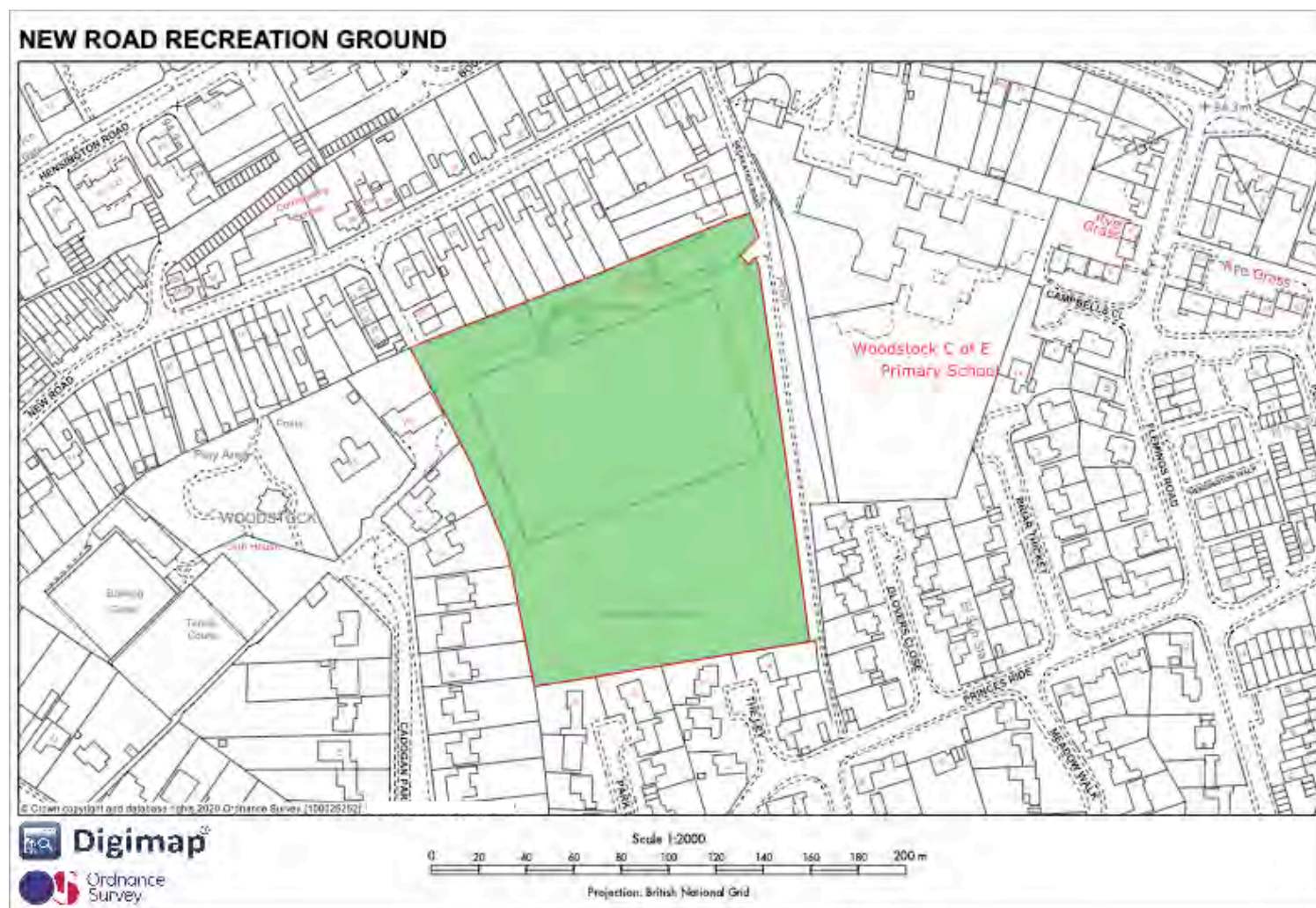


Figure 14: New Road Recreation Ground LGS

(7) OWL Nature Reserve:

"The OWL corridor is a rich wildlife corridor joining the town with the countryside... a haven for wildlife and people in the town... an exception area for birdlife." (Consultation comments)

- 4.10 The Old Woodstock Line (OWL) Nature Reserve is a linear parcel of land that stretches across eastern Woodstock out to Shipton Road. It was acquired by the Town Council in 2005 and having lain abandoned for many years has since been transformed into a linear nature reserve. The site provides important sanctuary to local wildlife including butterflies, birds, reptiles and orchids. The eastern part of the site also provides a popular 'wild' trail for ramblers/dog walkers. Respondents to consultation indicated that it is used on a regular basis for informal exercise and enjoying local wildlife, as well as being a place of historical significance and beauty.



Figure 15: OWL Nature Reserve LGS

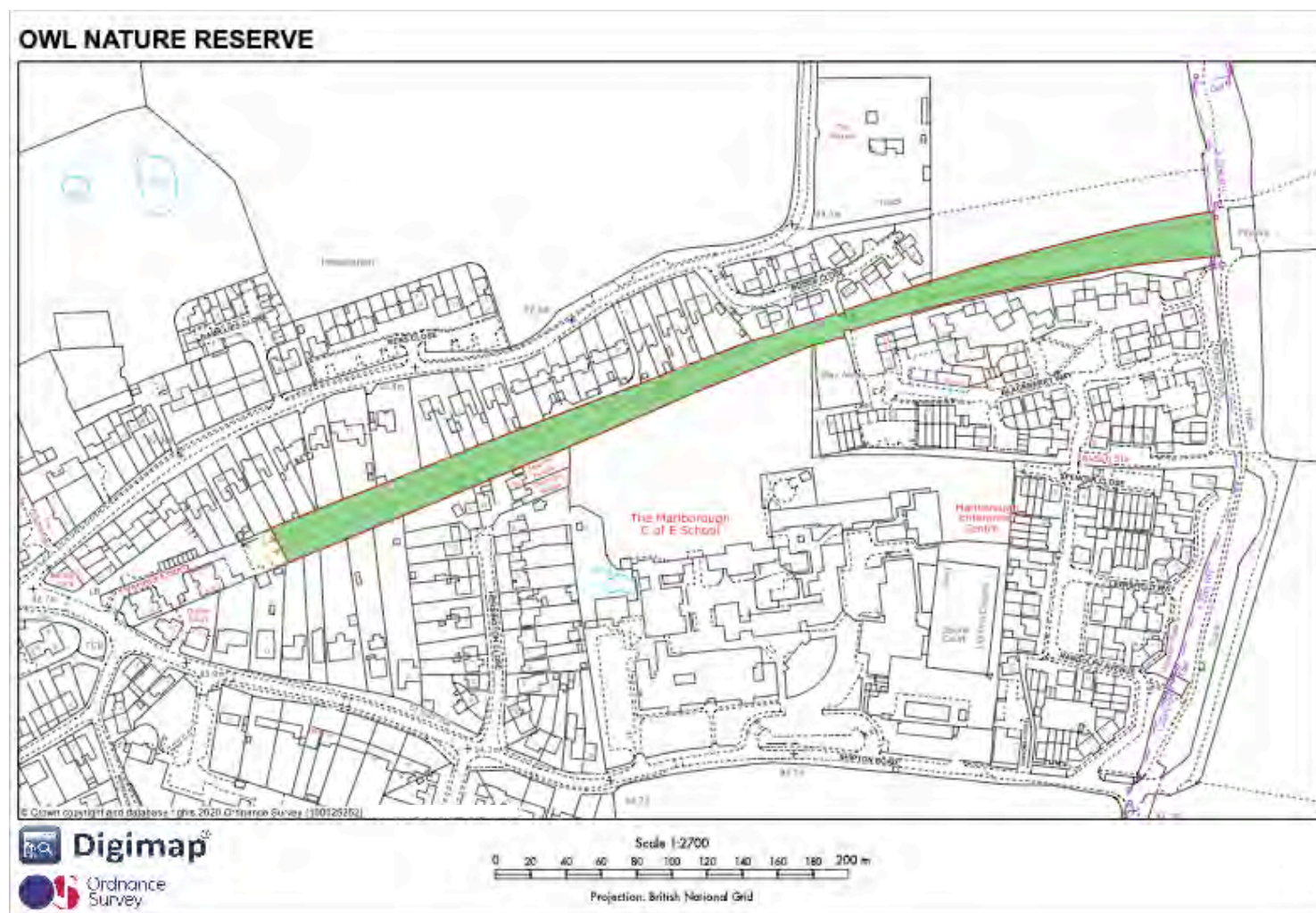


Figure 16: Owl Nature Reserve LGS

(8) Green Lane Cemetery:

- 4.11 Green Lane Cemetery is a landscaped cemetery currently in use. Frequently visited by local residents and of important historical significance to the community, it has demonstrable value. The site is outside of Woodstock's urban form but is within walking distance. There are no planning applications for the site, but an application submitted for the land to the east/south east puts the site at risk of future development. Consequently, local green space designation would provide important protection in the future. Respondents to consultation suggested that the cemetery was highly valued for its tranquillity and that it also has historic significance. It was noted as being used for relaxation, access to and enjoying wildlife.



Figure 17: Green Lane Cemetery LGS

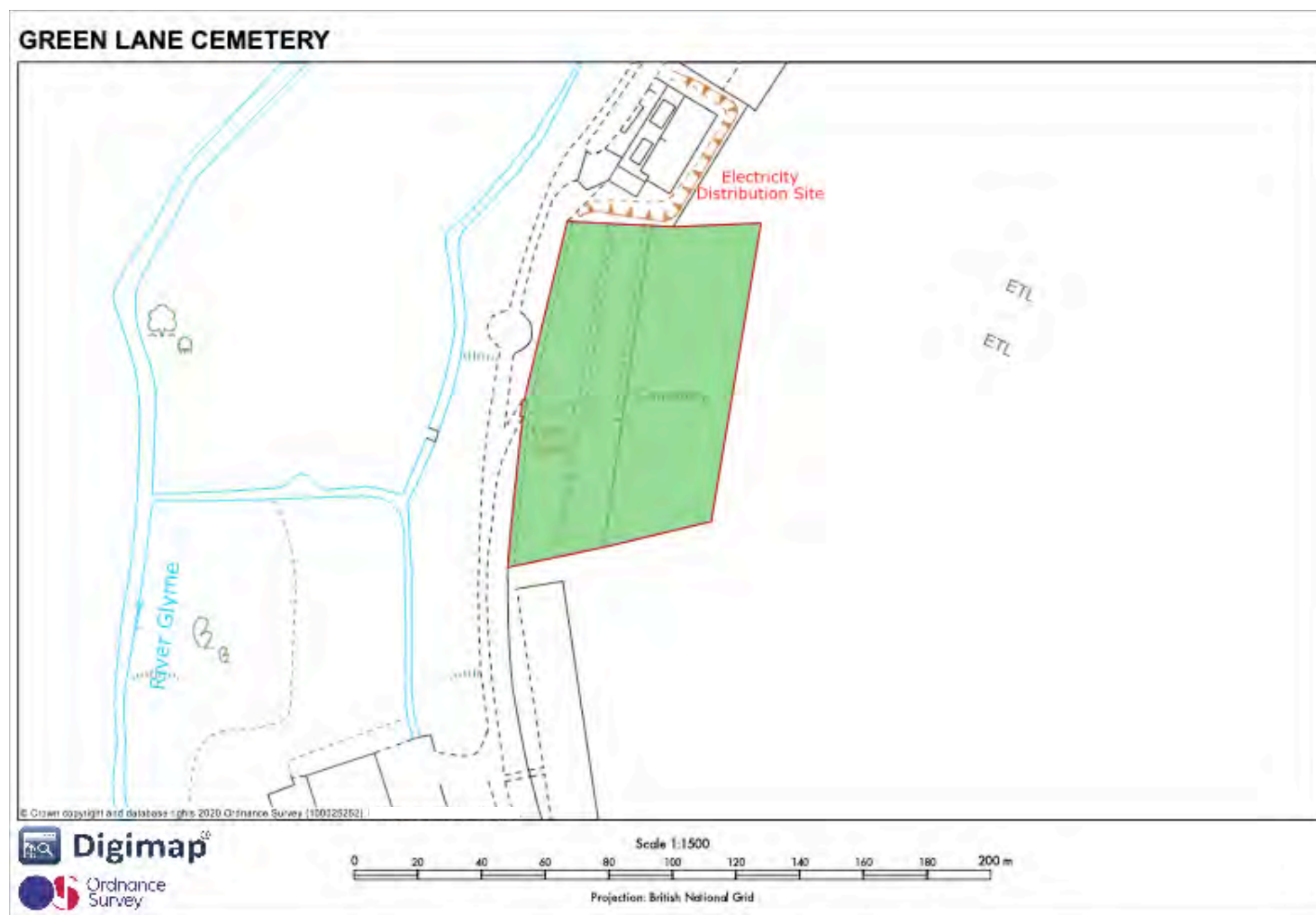


Figure 18: Green Lane Cemetery LGS

(9) Green Lane Allotments:

- 4.12 The Green Lane Allotments are an important informal recreational space for the local community (gardening). It is the only allotment space within Woodstock Parish and is well used – there is a waiting list for new spaces. Though currently outside of the Town’s urban form, the site is within walking distance and has clear demonstrable value to the community. Allotments are protected under Local Plan Policy E5 and the Open Space Study 2013, but more site-specific protection would be beneficial. Respondents to the survey highlighted the importance of the allotments as a place for locally grown food, supporting informal exercise and wildlife.



Figure 19: Green Lane Allotments LGS

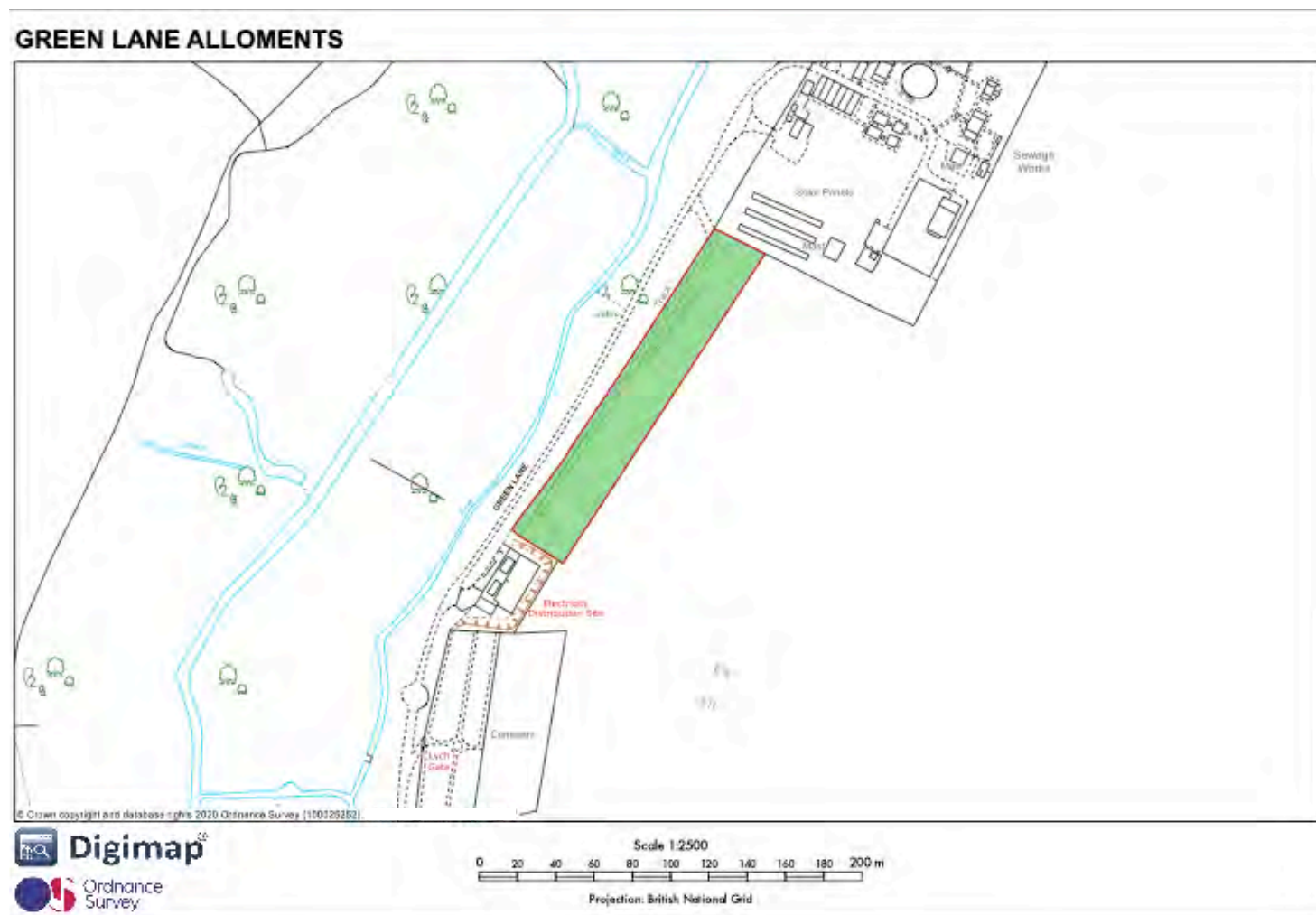


Figure 20: Green Lane Cemetery LGS

(10) Watermeadows:

"The historic watermeadows are both tranquil and teeming with wildlife - an important recreational walking area." (Consultation comment)

- 4.13 Marking the flood plain of the River Glyme, the Watermeadows are a unique feature on the northern edge of the town. The site is rich in biodiversity, providing a valuable habitat for birds, small mammals, plants, small aquatic species and trees. The site has a number of Priority Habitats (Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Lowland Fens, Deciduous Woodland) within its boundary but no national or local wildlife designation. The Watermeadows are easily accessible to the public via a number of Public Rights of Way; though this means the site has some protection, without a local wildlife designation, the Local Green Space designation is still a valuable tool to ensure the site's protection. Respondents to consultation highlighted the significance of the watermeadows in respect of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity and richness of wildlife. It is visited regularly for informal exercise, relaxation and enjoying wildlife. The Watermeadows are in the process of being designated formally as a Local Nature Reserve.



Figure 21: Watermeadows LGS



(11) Old Woodstock Play Area:

- 4.14 The Old Woodstock Play Area at the end of Rosamund Drive contains a swing set, slide and additional open space. It is an important recreational space for young children and their parents and therefore of demonstrable value to the community. The wider site is currently the subject of a planning application and has been allocated in the Local Plan for 120 Homes under Policy EW4. Though this would ordinarily mean the site does not fit the criteria for a Local Green Space, but Policy EW4 states that 'replacement/enhancement of the existing children's play area and public open space adjacent to Rosamund Drive' should be included within the development. With this in mind, it is the view that the Play Area is suitable for local green space designation. Respondents to consultation noted that the Play Area is locally significant in terms of its recreational value and tranquillity, as well as proximity to wildlife. It is regularly used by the local community, primarily for local play, but also for relaxation and informal exercise.



Figure 23: Old Woodstock Play Area LGS



Figure 24: Old Woodstock Play Area LGS

(12) Community Orchard and Community Woodland:

"A place for residents to volunteer for outdoor activities and being close to nature... A rich area of ecologically diverse flora and fauna" (Consultation comments)

- 4.15 The Community Orchard and Community Woodland is a linear parcel of land that runs adjacent to the A44 north of Old Woodstock. Owned by Blenheim but on a long lease to the Town Council, the site is managed by the community group 'Sustainable Woodstock'. It is an important social and recreational space, with members of the Woodstock community regularly coming together to tend to the orchard having planted more than 900 trees in winter 2010/11 to commemorate 900 years since the foundation of Woodstock. Though outside of Woodstock's main built-up area, the regularity with which it is used suggests that it is within a reasonable distance of the community it serves. There is no planning application for the site. Respondents to consultation suggested that the Community Orchard and Community Woodland is used on a regular basis and is valued for tranquillity, richness of wildlife, relaxation and exercise.



Figure 25: Community Orchard and Community Woodland LGS



Figure 26: Community Orchard and Community Woodland LGS

(13) Hensington Road Cemetery:

- 4.16 Situated in the heart of Woodstock, the Hensington Road Cemetery (Woodstock Cemetery) is an important historical site for the local community. The cemetery is well looked after and frequently visited by local residents. There is no planning application for development on the site and it has clear demonstrable value. Respondents to consultation indicated that the Cemetery has historic significance and is also rich in wildlife, and is used on a regular basis, often for informal exercise and relaxation.



Figure 27: Hensington Road Cemetery LGS



Figure 28: Hensington Road Cemetery LGS

5. What Happens Next?

- 5.1 This is the draft version Neighbourhood Plan for Woodstock. It will be subject to a period of formal consultation lasting for six-weeks (known as 'Regulation 14' consultation) and any necessary amendment made following review of feedback before it is submitted to West Oxfordshire Council who will start the 'examination process'.
- 5.2 West Oxfordshire Council will formally consult on the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan and appoint an independent examiner to review the Plan and any comments made in response to it. Following this, the examiner will issue a report to the District Council advising whether:
- The Plan should proceed to referendum.
 - The Plan should proceed to referendum subject to modification.
 - The Plan should not proceed to referendum.
- 5.3 For the examiner to advise that the Plan proceed to referendum it will need to be demonstrated that the Plan meets what are called the 'Basic Conditions'. These include showing that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the Local Development Plan (i.e. the West Oxfordshire Local Plan).
- 5.4 West Oxfordshire District Council will organise the referendum. All people of voting age in the Parish are eligible to vote on whether the Plan should be brought into force ('made') or not. If more than 50% of all people who turnout vote in favour of making the Plan, then it will become part of the suite of planning policies used by West Oxfordshire District Council to help shape and determine planning applications in Woodstock.

Appendix 1: Planning Practice Guidance

The following is extracted from Planning Practice Guidance and provides an overview of the Local Green Space Designation, how these should be identified and what is conferred by designation.

What is Local Green Space designation?

Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 37-005-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How is land designated as Local Green Space?

Local Green Space designation is for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These plans can identify on a map ('designate') green areas for special protection. Anyone who wants an area to be designated as Local Green Space should contact the local planning authority about the contents of its local plan or get involved in neighbourhood planning.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 37-006-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How does Local Green Space designation relate to development?

Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 37-007-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What if land has planning permission for development?

Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented.

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 37-008-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Can all communities benefit from Local Green Space?

Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town or city.

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 37-009-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What if land is already protected by Green Belt or as Metropolitan Open Land (in London)?

If land is already protected by Green Belt policy, or in London, policy on Metropolitan Open Land, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

One potential benefit in areas where protection from development is the norm (eg villages included in the green belt) but where there could be exceptions is that the Local Green Space designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community.

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 37-010-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What if land is already protected by designations such as National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monument or conservation area?

Different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes. If land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 37-011-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What about new communities?

New residential areas may include green areas that were planned as part of the development. Such green areas could be designated as Local Green Space if they are demonstrably special and hold particular local significance.

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 37-012-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What types of green area can be identified as Local Green Space?

The green area will need to meet the criteria set out in paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis.

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 37-013-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How close does a Local Green Space need to be to the community it serves?

The proximity of a Local Green Space to the community it serves will depend on local circumstances, including why the green area is seen as special, but it must be reasonably close. For example, if public access is a key factor, then the site would normally be within easy walking distance of the community served.

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 37-014-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How big can a Local Green Space be?

There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed. However, paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. Consequently blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Is there a minimum area?

Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space.

Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 37-016-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What about public access?

Some areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may already have largely unrestricted public access, though even in places like parks there may be some restrictions. However, other land could be considered for designation

even if there is no public access (eg green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty).

Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present. Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with land owners, whose legal rights must be respected.

Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 37-017-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What about public rights of way?

Areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may be crossed by public rights of way. There is no need to designate linear corridors as Local Green Space simply to protect rights of way, which are already protected under other legislation.

Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 37-018-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Does land need to be in public ownership?

A Local Green Space does not need to be in public ownership. However, the local planning authority (in the case of local plan making) or the qualifying body (in the case of neighbourhood plan making) should contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan.

Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 37-019-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Would designation place any restrictions or obligations on landowners?

Designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners.

Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 37-020-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Who will manage Local Green Space?

Management of land designated as Local Green Space will remain the responsibility of its owner. If the features that make a green area special and locally significant are to be conserved, how it will be managed in the future is likely to be an important consideration. Local communities can consider how, with the landowner's

agreement, they might be able to get involved, perhaps in partnership with interested organisations that can provide advice or resources.

Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 37-021-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Can a Local Green Space be registered as an Asset of Community Value?

Land designated as Local Green Space may potentially also be nominated for listing by the local authority as an Asset of Community Value. Listing gives community interest groups an opportunity to bid if the owner wants to dispose of the land.

Related policy: paragraphs 99-100

Paragraph: 022 Reference ID: 37-022-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

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Glossary

Adoption – The final confirmation of a development plan by a local planning authority.

Brownfield Site – see Previously Developed Land.

Conservation Area - an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is preserved by local planning policies and guidance.

Development Plan - Includes the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan and any future adopted Local Plan which may replace it, and Neighbourhood Development Plans which are used to determine planning applications.

Evidence base - The background information that any Development Plan Document is based on and is made up of studies on specific issues, such as housing need for example.

Greenfield site - Land where there has been no previous development, often in agricultural use

Green-space - Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments and the like.

Heritage Asset – A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated assets (e.g.: listed buildings) and assets identified by the local planning authority, which may include a local list of assets.

Independent Examination - An assessment of a proposed Neighbourhood Plan carried out by an independent person to consider whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan conforms with the relevant legal requirements.

Infill Development – small scale development filling a gap within an otherwise built up frontage.

Infrastructure – Basic services necessary for development to take place, for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

Listed Building – building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II or II*, with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

Local Plan – the Plan for future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority. This forms part of the Development Plan.

Local Planning Authority - Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, county council, a unitary authority or national park authority. For Woodstock this is West Oxfordshire Council

Made – terminology used in neighbourhood planning to indicate a Plan has been adopted.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - is the Government department with responsibility for planning, housing, urban regeneration and local government (MHCLG). Previously known as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

National Planning Policy Framework – sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The current version of the NPPF was published in February 2019.

Neighbourhood Development Plan – A local plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council (or Forum) for a particular Neighbourhood Area, which includes land use topics. Once made this forms part of the Development Plan.

Outline Application – a general application for planning permission to establish that a development is acceptable in principle, subject to subsequent approval of detailed matters. Does not apply to changes of use.

Permitted Development – comprises certain categories of minor development as specified in the General Permitted Development Order, which can be carried out without having first to obtain specific planning permission.

Planning Permission - Formal approval granted by a council (e.g. West Oxfordshire Council) in allowing a proposed development to proceed.

Previously Developed Land - Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Public Open Space - Open space to which the public has free access and which fulfils, or can fulfil, a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural uses).

Public Realm – Those parts of a city, town or village, whether publicly or privately owned, which are available for everyone to use. This includes streets, square and parks.

Public Right of Way – Paths on which the public has a legally protected right to pass and re-pass.

Section 106 Agreement – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal.

Soundness – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified (founded on robust and credible evidence and be the most appropriate strategy), whether the plan is effective (deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored), and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy.

Stakeholder – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and national organisations and government departments

Sustainable Communities – Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

Sustainable Development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainability Appraisal – An appraisal of the economic, environment and social effects of a Plan to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

Urban Design – The art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development.

Acknowledgements

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Woodstock Town Council

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