

Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 Regulation 19 Consultation on Proposed Submission Documents, December 2024 – February 2025

Representations from Kidlington Development Watch

Information requested in part A of the representation form and other details.

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Introduction

Kidlington Development Watch (KDW) is pleased to respond to this consultation. We have followed Planning Inspectorate guidance which encourages those sharing a common view to make one joint response. We have therefore asked subscribers to our mailing list and website visitors to endorse our response by allowing us to add their details to this submission.

240 people have endorsed this response and their names are appended to this document. We have also provided, separately and not for publication, the same list of names of people endorsing our response together with their addresses and postcodes.

KDW is a voluntary organisation established in 2014 and run by Kidlington residents with experience and interest in planning issues. We believe that effective, informed public participation in planning consultations is vital to democratic policy making. We publicise consultations that directly affect Kidlington and offer advice on how people can best make their views known. We do this by: emailing to a large list of supporters, maintaining a website, printing and distributing leaflets, participating in parish council meetings, and responding to requests for information from Kidlington residents.

As a result, we have gained a very good understanding of the views of Kidlington residents, a large number of whom have made representations because of our activities. KDW's representations therefore reflect the views of much of the Kidlington community.

Kidlington Development Watch: General Response

KDW has responded to all three previous consultations on this plan and has objected to further proposed development in the Green Belt and what we considered to be excessive

Part A form and Introduction

housing need assessments. We are pleased therefore that the Council is adopting a pragmatic and realistic approach to the latter. We also support its decision not to allocate any further land for development in the Green Belt.

Major changes were made to Green Belt boundaries in the Local Plan Partial Review (2020) and large areas of land were allocated for residential and employment-generating development in the area around Kidlington. It now appears, from permissions granted, that the number of houses and employment floorspace will significantly exceed those initially anticipated. However, very little development has actually commenced and the area has yet to experience the impact of this on transport, infrastructure and services.

We consider, therefore, that the Council is right to retain Green Belt boundaries, which have only recently been substantially changed, and that further development should not be allocated given the large existing commitments.

Kidlington Development Watch Specific Representations

Four specific individual representations (corresponding to Part B forms) are appended. These cover responses we have made at earlier stages of consultation on the following:

1. Proposal for a 'Green Ring' of interconnected green spaces around Kidlington.
2. Proposed Local Green Space at Bury Moor Fields (also referred to as "Land Behind the Moors")
3. Proposed Local Green Space Land West of the footpath from Mill-End to St Mary's Church, Kidlington
4. Proposed Local Green Space at Stratfield Brake (Playing Fields)

Each representation includes all of the information requested in the Part B form, namely:

Relevant document(s) and sections (questions 1 & 2)

Soundness and Compliance (question 3)

Reasons for Our objection or representation (question 4)

The change we seek to the plan (question 5)

Our answers to questions 6 and 7 on the Part B form are the same for each representation, as follows:

Question 6. Yes, we wish to participate at the oral Examination into the plan.

Question 7. ("Why is this necessary?")

We (Kidlington Development Watch – KDW) consider this is necessary because of: our extensive involvement with the consultations at all stages of the Cherwell Local Plan to date; the considerable work we have undertaken to publicise the consultations ourselves; the feedback we have received from Kidlington residents; and, the large numbers of them who have endorsed this response or responded separately as a result of our efforts. (Please also see further background given in the introduction to our representations)

Kidlington Development Watch

February 2025.

Representation 1 of 4, (Part B form) from Kidlington Development Watch

Proposal for a ‘Green Ring’ of interconnected green spaces around Kidlington.

Questions 1&2. Relevant document & sections relating to this representation

Proposed Submission Plan Policy KID4 and paragraphs 6.85 to 6.88

Question 3. Soundness and Compliance We consider the plan to be UNSOUND in this respect. It is not justified as it has not taken account of representations made and evidence provided for this proposal.

Question 4. Reasons for our objection or representation

We support Kidlington Parish Council’s ambition to create a “*network of accessible, and wherever possible linked green spaces around Kidlington*” (for simplicity below we refer to this as a ‘Green Ring’). This is now particularly important as the Kidlington area will experience significant development in the coming years as a result of the development of the sites allocated for 4,400 houses in the 2020 Local Plan Partial Review. On the basis of planning applications already submitted the 4,400 is likely to be substantially exceeded and accompanied by other development including 155,000sqm of employment floorspace and major developments such as Oxford North close by.

The creation of a ‘Green Ring’ would help both to preserve Kidlington’s distinct identity and also to provide access to open countryside and green spaces for Kidlington residents. We consider that CDC, which originally responded positively to the proposal, is not justified in rejecting it and we ask that the Local Plan is amended to support this ambition.

Kidlington Parish Council proposed this ‘Green Ring’ idea in the first consultation (‘Issues’) in the autumn of 2020. This was then taken up by CDC and suggested as an option in the ‘Options’ consultation. The Council subsequently reported that the majority of respondents chose this option.

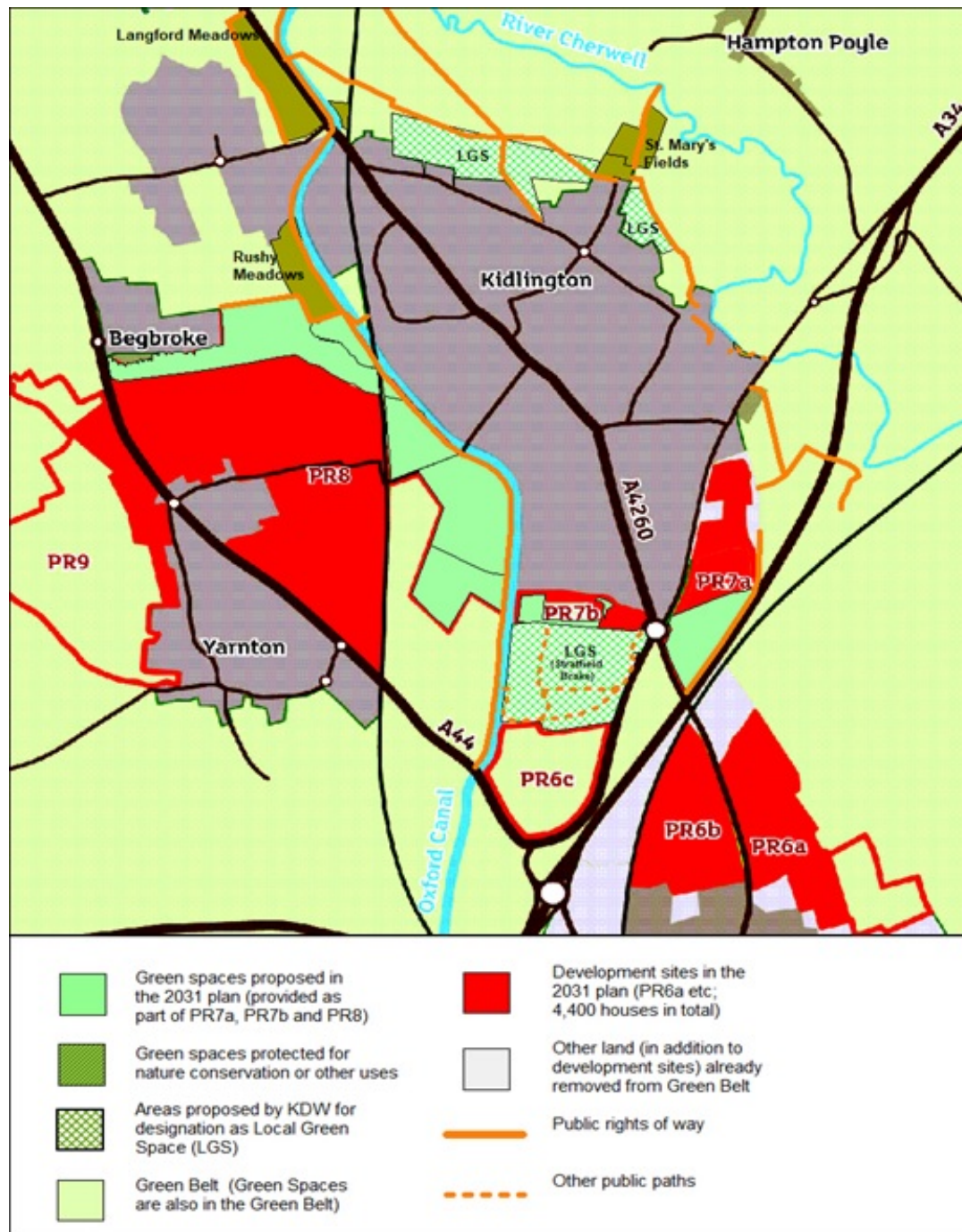
We (Kidlington Development Watch) also supported the idea and, in our response to the Options consultation we went further by analysing how it could be implemented in practice. We included that analysis in our response to the consultation. **(See appendix to this representation.)**

In summary, our analysis showed that the Green Ring could be largely implemented through a combination of (1) existing areas designated for nature conservation purposes, (2) new green areas to be created as a result of requirements for sites allocated in the Partial Review, (3) the existing Rights of Way network (enhanced and expanded), and (4) the designation of two new Local Green Spaces on the North and North East boundary of the village. The Local Green Space designation was considered necessary in recognition of their particular significance to the local community and to support the Parish Council’s aim.

Our analysis is summarised in the map below.

Despite the support for the idea reported by CDC, and KDW’s analysis, the third consultation (draft plan, Reg18, Sept 2023) did not include any reference to the creation of a Green Ring and our Green Space proposals were rejected. We believe that the proposed creation of the

Green Ring was not adequately considered when assessing the particular local significance of the Local Green Spaces we put forward.



Hence, in response to this third consultation, KDW restated its support for the Green Ring and its proposals for the two Local Green Spaces it had previously nominated.

It also nominated a third LGS at Stratfield Brake.

In conclusion, KDW has supported and developed the Parish Council's original 'Green Ring' proposal. The Parish Council has maintained its support throughout. The proposal was also well supported in responses to the 'Options' consultation. We therefore consider that this

aim should be recognized in the objectives of the Kidlington Area Strategy and Local Green Spaces (see other KDW representations) should be designated to help achieve that aim.

Question 5. The change(s) we seek to the plan

- The Kidlington Area Strategy should be amended to refer to the proposal for a Green Ring: a *“network of accessible, and wherever possible linked green spaces around Kidlington”*.

- Policy COM25 should include the three Local Green Spaces we have proposed, and which are the subject of separate representations.

Question 6. Yes, we wish to participate at the oral Examination into the plan.

Question 7. (“Why is this necessary?”) We (Kidlington Development Watch – KDW) consider this is necessary because of: our extensive involvement with the consultations at all stages of the Cherwell Local Plan to date; the considerable work we have undertaken to publicise the consultations ourselves; the feedback we have received from Kidlington residents; and, the large numbers of them who have endorsed this response or responded separately as a result of our efforts. (Please also see further background given in the introduction to our representations)

Appendix to KDW Representation 1 : Green Ring.

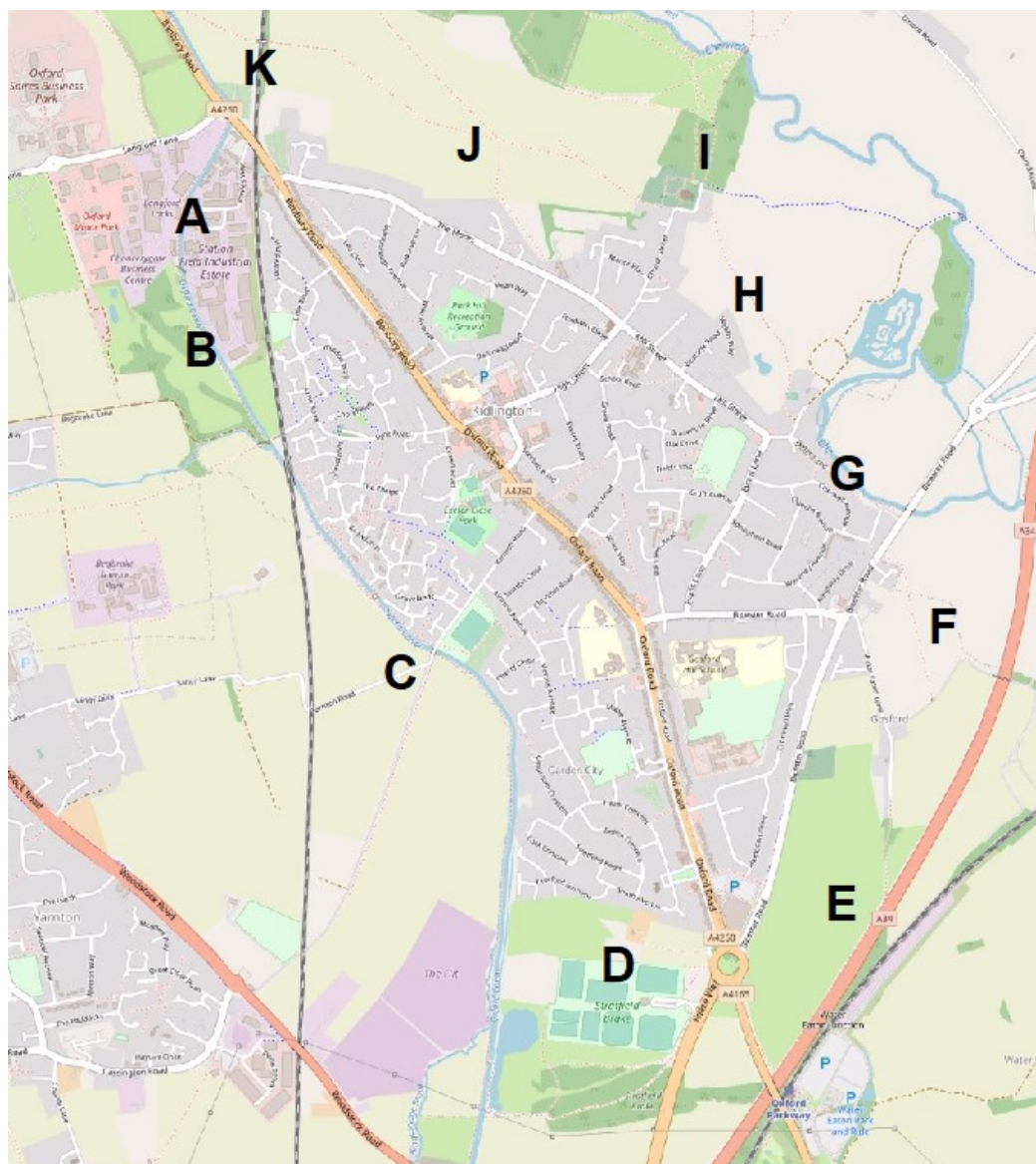
From Response to Options Consultation, November 2021.

KDW Representation 6: Green Ring and Local Green Spaces (Option 28, p91)

KDW supports Kidlington Parish Council’s aim (para 6.4.14) to secure a connected ring of green space around the whole edge of Kidlington through the Local Plan Review and to strengthen Kidlington’s distinctive character of a ‘village set in the landscape’.

We also agree with CDC’s proposal – as far as it goes - to explore the potential to create a network of accessible, and wherever possible, linked green spaces around Kidlington. However, it should be possible to do much more than simply ‘explore the potential’. There should be a commitment to actually create the network of what green spaces now remain and to retain the distinctive character of a ‘village set in the landscape’ as far as possible.

This aim will be to an extent constrained by pre-existing development and even more so by the proposals in the LPPR Plan, now that these have been adopted. Taking this into account, we have studied the entire boundary of the village in order to analyse the potential for a green network surrounding the village and we make the following observations and conclusions. Our description follows the edge of the village anti-clockwise from the Banbury Road and the areas discussed are indicated by the letters on the map below.



(A) Pre-existing industrial estate development is a constraint at the northern end, although the canal towpath does provide a connecting route.

(B) Slightly further south is the 9ha Rushy Meadows SSSI which is privately owned, and bounded by vegetation, but nevertheless protected and the towpath runs alongside it. The opposite bank of the canal is lined with trees and scrub, so, on this stretch of towpath, there is an impression of walking along a green corridor.

(C) A little further south and to the west of the village it is hard to see how an authentic 'village in a landscape' feel will be achieved given that most of the land between Kidlington, Begbroke and Yarnton will be covered by development. Nevertheless, the LPPR does include a requirement to provide for nature conservation and parkland areas in the remaining gap between the new development and Kidlington. These could partially achieve the desired aim and the individual elements can be connected by the existing canal towpath. Enhancement of this would be welcomed.

(D) At the southern end of the village the aim can be achieved through the Stratfield Brake Recreation Area and Nature Reserve with its existing footbridge connection to the canal path. To an extent it will be enhanced by the LPPR proposal to reserve half of site PR7b for

nature conservation. Unfortunately, the development of the rest of this site will also remove an attractive former farm which also contributed to the 'village in the landscape' concept.

(E) Moving to South East Kidlington, the potential here has been severely curtailed by the decision to allocate (and subsequently expand) site PR7a for housing. This has effectively closed the 'Kidlington Gap'. The existing right of way runs along the busy, noisy and polluting A34. We would hope that some means of at least retaining a green corridor through the development could be negotiated with the developers of this site.

(F) Beyond Water Eaton Lane the right of way links with the Oxford Green Belt Way and crosses fields until reaching the Bicester Road. This remains in the Green Belt, is not being put forward for development, and is mainly in Flood Zone 3.

(G) North of Bicester Road the village is bounded by the River Cherwell. There is farmland to the north of this but no river crossing for a considerable distance. Slightly further north at Mill End there is what is effectively a substantial private family estate which is both inaccessible and not visible, being screened by vegetation, though part of this is a proposed Local Wildlife Site. It would seem very unlikely that this could form part of a peripheral network of green spaces. The Green Belt Way itself is forced to run through residential development until Mill End. A circular route outside the village boundary would be possible by connecting to the National Cycle Route which runs across the Cherwell Meadows, also family owned but accessible with their permission. However this would be a very long detour and does not really meet the aim of surrounding the urban edge with green space.

(H) At Mill End, the Green Belt Way runs along one side of the 'family estate' and then emerges into open fields with fine views of the Grade 1 listed St Mary's church and the backs of old houses and other buildings (many of them listed Grade 2 or 2*) on Mill Street and Church Street. To the east there are open views across the meadows towards the Cherwell, which flood in winter. This area is included in the Church Street Conservation Area. The area provides an excellent example of the 'village in a landscape' concept. We therefore propose this area should be designated as Local Green Space (See Representation 7).

(I) North of St Mary's church is St Mary's Fields, a local nature reserve owned and maintained by Kidlington Parish Council which logically forms part of the proposed network.

(J) West of the church, a historic footpath runs through fields bounded by hedgerows across the northern edge of the village. Here there is a clear and distinct boundary separating the village from the fields immediately to the north (which then lead on to the Lower Cherwell Valley Conservation Target Area and the River Cherwell). This provides another prime opportunity to achieve the 'village in a landscape' aim. The land is in the Green Belt and is completely open (one of the two key characteristics of Green Belt). However, Green Belt protection is no longer sufficient and we therefore propose that the fields immediately to the north of the village should be designated as Local Green Space (see Representation 8).

(K) Beyond area (J) the right of way crosses the railway and rejoins the canal at the Banbury Road completing a circuit. East of the railway there is an unobtrusive caravan club site, and to the west are Parish Council allotments with an open field behind crossed by the right of way. Approaching Kidlington on the Banbury Road from the north, the junction with Langford Lane and the canal and railway bridges beyond form a natural entrance to the village. North of the junction there are fields on either side of the road and we consider that no further development is appropriate here. Indeed the fields to the west of the Banbury Road are a Local Wildlife Site and part of the Lower Cherwell Valley Conservation Target Area and should therefore be protected.

Conclusion.

We consider that, as described above, there is potential to create a peripheral network of open green space around the village and connected by Rights of Way which could help to achieve the 'village in the landscape' aim. Much of this potential is constrained by existing development and decisions which have already been taken. In summary:

Areas (A) & (G) are constrained by existing development restricting access;

Areas (B), (D,part) (F) and (I) are already protected as Green Areas by nature conservation; designations, recreation use or flood risk (in some cases more than one constraint applies);

Areas (C), and (D,part) are areas of LPPR sites which are reserved as Green Spaces;

Area (E) is also a site in the LPPR where it is now difficult to provide a link in a network of Green Spaces – we strongly suggest that CDC negotiates with the developer on this matter;

Areas (H) and (J) provide the best opportunities for realising the aim of 'a village in the landscape'.

Most of these areas are therefore either protected as Green Areas by more than Green Belt designation, or cannot be Green as they are already developed. It is not essential for areas in these two categories to be formally protected by Local Green Space designation, although this might nevertheless be considered worthwhile.

Proposal for areas to be designated as Local Green Space

However, to the north and north east of the village are two areas (H&J) providing the best remaining examples of Green Space fulfilling the 'village in the landscape' concept. They are only currently protected by Green Belt designation.

Given this and the recent removal of substantial areas of land from the Green Belt elsewhere around the village, we consider that CDC should provide additional protection in its Local Plan Review by designating these two areas as Local Green Space (LGS).

Representation 2 of 4, (Part B form) from Kidlington Development Watch

Proposed Bury Moor Fields Local Green Space

(This land is also referred to as “Land Behind the Moors”)

Q1&2 Relevant document & sections relating to this representation

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space (page159)

Q3 Soundness and Compliance

We consider the plan to be UNSOUND in this respect. It is not justified as it has not taken account of representations made and evidence provided for this proposal.

Q4 Reasons for our objection or representation

The Council’s reasons for rejecting our proposal to designate Bury Moor Fields as a Local Green Space are not justified and it has failed to take account of the special significance of this land to the local community as set out in our previous representations. (See attached).

We disagree with the Council’s assertion in the addendum to its Local Green Space Designation Study (November 2024) that this is an extensive tract of land. In its original LGS appraisal document (Cherwell Local Green Space Designation Study Final Report, January 2023) the proposal passed the “first sieve” stage where one of the two criteria was that the site should not be an extensive tract of land. The consultants preparing that report clearly did not consider it an extensive tract of land.

It consists of five relatively small fields, four of which are in a line along the northern boundary of the village while the fifth forms a triangular wedge connecting them to a residential road. Together they form a distinctive and clearly defined site with a land area of about 21ha. There is no defined upper limit for the size of a LGS and while 20ha is sometimes taken as a guideline (Cheltenham/Cotswold Councils’ toolkit) this is an arbitrary figure and a number of LGS have been designated that are above this size. Furthermore it is a similar area to the land designated in this plan by the Council at Stratfield Brake Nature Reserve. (approx 21ha according to our measurement on Google Maps).

The recreational value of the land amounts to much more than use of the Public Rights of Way because informal paths along almost all of the field boundaries are used (and have been created) by walkers and runners. This has been the case for many years and accepted by the landowner, although recently attempts have been made to prevent such use.

The land is adjacent to, and can be directly accessed from, the built-up area of the village, and therefore differs in character from the broader, surrounding countryside, while permitting access to it. The land is in the Green Belt but is a good example of where “*Local Green Space designation [within the Green Belt] could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community*” (National Planning Policy Guidance).

This land will also form an important element in the “Green Ring of Interconnected Green Spaces” which Kidlington Parish Council wishes to create. (See Representation 1)

Q5 The change we seek to the plan

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space should include Bury Moor Fields, Kidlington in the list of Local Green Spaces and a map of the area should be included in Appendix 5 to the plan)

Q6. Yes, we wish to participate at the oral Examination into the plan.

Q7. (“Why is this necessary?”)

We (Kidlington Development Watch – KDW) consider this is necessary because of: our extensive involvement with the consultations at all stages of the Cherwell Local Plan to date; the considerable work we have undertaken to publicise the consultations ourselves; the feedback we have received from Kidlington residents; and, the large numbers of them who have endorsed this response or responded separately as a result of our efforts. (Please also see further background given in the introduction to our representations)

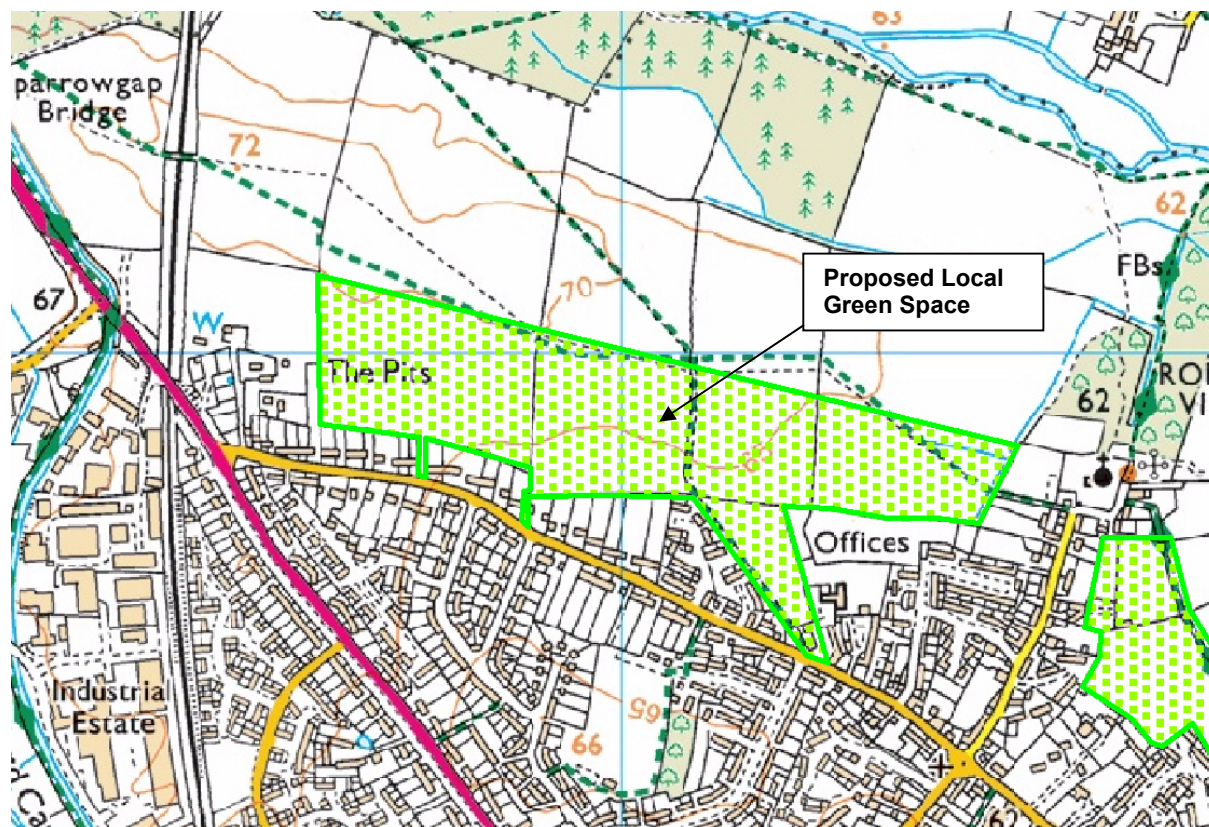
Please see Appendix on the following pages.

Appendix to KDW Representation 2 : Proposed LGS at Bury Moor Fields

Originally submitted to 2nd and 3rd consultations on the Local Plan.

Proposal from Kidlington Development Watch for a Local Green Space at Bury Moor Fields. Re-submission, please see main text for explanation.

This is one of the two specific local green spaces proposed by KDW north and north-east of the village. The site is shown on the map below.



(Note that after crossing the easternmost field as shown, the E-W footpath, in practice, follows the boundary of the proposed LGS rather than the green dashed lines indicated on the map)

NPPF Criteria. The proposed LGS meets the NPPF criteria for designation, as follows:

Proximity to the local community

The area consists of five fields immediately adjacent to the built up area of Kidlington. There are several well-used access points from the nearby roads and two public rights of way cross and run along the proposed area. In addition, every field boundary has informal paths along it, demonstrating how extensively the area is used by the local community.

Historic significance

Kidlington is unusual in that its parish church is situated on the extremity of the village, on a slightly elevated site at the end of an area of terraced river gravels which runs along Church Street. St Mary's Church is Grade 1 listed, dates back 800 years and has an exceptionally tall and slender steeple (known as 'Our Lady's Needle'). It is the final building on the northern edge of the village and is almost surrounded by fields, with the exception of houses at the northern end of Church Street. As the surrounding land is low-lying, the church is visible

from considerable distances. When seen from many directions it appears to be set amongst fields.

The west-east centre line of the proposed LGS aligns with the church as can be seen from the photograph below.



The setting of this important historic building would clearly be damaged by development in these fields.

Kidlington Historical Society comments that : *“the landscape is a good example of post-enclosure Kidlington, with most of the field boundaries those set out on the Enclosure Map. The age of the hedges will be an indication of their value for wildlife. There is an ancient (possibly Roman) well just north of the area, in Ashpit. It's an odd place to find a well, right on top of the cornbrash ridge running down to the Church, so there may be archaeology around it, extending into the proposed LGS. This area is part of the setting of St Mary's with delightful views down the ridge towards the church from the footpath to Sparrowgap Bridge. The LGS would preserve these for future generations.”*

Recreational value

The site is crossed and bounded by two popular footpaths which are very well used by local people and visiting walkers. These are both enclosure awards from 1818 and should be maintained to a width of ten feet, though in practice they are not. The east-west path leads from the church towards the canal bridge near the Jolly Boatman public house next to the Banbury Road. The SE-NW path leads from the Moors to the Community Woodland and Canal Basin at Thrupp. A key attraction of these paths is that they cross open countryside and have fine views east to St Mary's Church.

In addition to this, almost every field boundary, including along the rear boundaries of houses on the Moors, is lined by informal paths which are regularly used for recreation by large numbers of local people.

Beauty, Tranquility and Richness of Wildlife

The site is in attractive open countryside (see photo above) which leads to the Cherwell Meadows Conservation Target Area and the River Cherwell itself. There are almost no buildings until the nearest villages are reached and no through roads. Consequently the area is tranquil and has the feel of being part of the countryside. This is not the case almost anywhere else on the village boundary.

The fields are relatively small and bounded by hedges and trees which therefore support a variety of wildlife, particularly birds and including rare wildlife species such as Short Eared Owls (on the RSPB amber list), and Skylarks (on the RSPB red list). Other bird species noted by local residents include goldfinch, greenfinch, redstart, jay, spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, tree creeper, dunnock, cuckoos and various birds of prey and owls. Foxes and Deer are also frequently seen in the area and smaller animals include weasels, field mice adders and grass snakes. At the point where the SE-NW footpath joins the Moors there is a small pond surrounded by scrub which, although now rather neglected, was maintained for many years for nature conservation and would benefit from restoration. Great Crested Newts have been found here in the past.

The site is close to the Cherwell Valley Conservation Target Area and to the St Mary's Fields Local Nature Reserve. It can therefore also be considered to be a protective buffer and corridor to these important habitats.

Local in Character

Guidance says that the site should not be extensive in nature but does not define extensive. In our view the proposed site is not extensive, certainly when compared to the areas of land that have already been removed from the Green Belt or from sites that are being put forward for development at the moment. We are aware of examples elsewhere of larger sites which local authorities have deemed suitable as LGS (see for example Bulmershe and Fox Hill sites in Wokingham's 2020 Local Green Space Topic Paper). While it extends over several fields, the width of the proposed LGS is limited to that of one modest field, and all of it meets the criteria set out above.

Important. We consider that this is not an extensive area. However, if the proposed area is deemed to be too extensive, it should not simply be rejected. Instead, consideration should be given to designating individual fields (or combinations of fields) as LGS.

Representation 3 of 4, (Part B form) from Kidlington Development Watch

Proposed Local Green Space a Local Green Space to protect the Church Street Conservation Area and setting of St Mary's

(Land West of the footpath from Mill-End to St Mary's Church, Kidlington)

Q1&2 Relevant document & sections relating to this representation

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space (page159)

Q3 Soundness and Compliance

We consider the plan to be UNSOUND as it is not justified in this respect. It is not justified as it has not taken account of representations made and evidence provided for this proposal.

Q4 Reasons for our objection or representation

The Council's reasons for rejecting our proposal to designate this land as a Local Green Space are not justified and it has failed to take account of the special significance of this land to the local community as set out in our previous representations. (Please see appendix).

The Council's Assessment recognises the validity of our representations concerning beauty, tranquillity, heritage and recreational value. However it goes on to say that *"It is considered that the features of local significance can be enjoyed [and local heritage can be appreciated] from the PRoW without the need for the designation of the remainder of the site as a Local Green Space."* (Cherwell Local Green Space Designation Study Final Report, January 2023). However, KDW considers that maintaining the openness of the land is essential to maintaining the beauty and tranquillity of the area and the enjoyment of the local heritage and this justifies designation as LGS. Conservation Area status by itself does not guarantee this and while the site is also Green Belt it is a good example of where *"Local Green Space designation [within the Green Belt] could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community"* (National Planning Policy Guidance).

We also disagree with the assessment that *"The nominated area is not greatly distinct from the surrounding locale"*. The fields to the east of the PRoW are more open in character and are not essential to the appreciation of the local heritage from the PRoW as is the land proposed as LGS.

This land will also form an important element in the "Green Ring of Interconnected Green Spaces" which Kidlington Parish Council wishes to create. (See Representation 1)

Q5 The change we seek to the plan

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space should include "Land West of the footpath from Mill-End to St Mary's Church, Kidlington" in the list of Local Green Spaces and a map of the area should be included in Appendix 5 to the plan).

Q6. Yes, we wish to participate at the oral Examination into the plan.

Q7. ("Why is this necessary?")

We (Kidlington Development Watch – KDW) consider this is necessary because of: our extensive involvement with the consultations at all stages of the Cherwell Local Plan to date; the considerable work we have undertaken to publicise the consultations ourselves; the feedback we have received from Kidlington residents; and, the large numbers of them who have endorsed this response or responded separately as a result of our efforts. (Please also see further background given in the introduction to our representations)

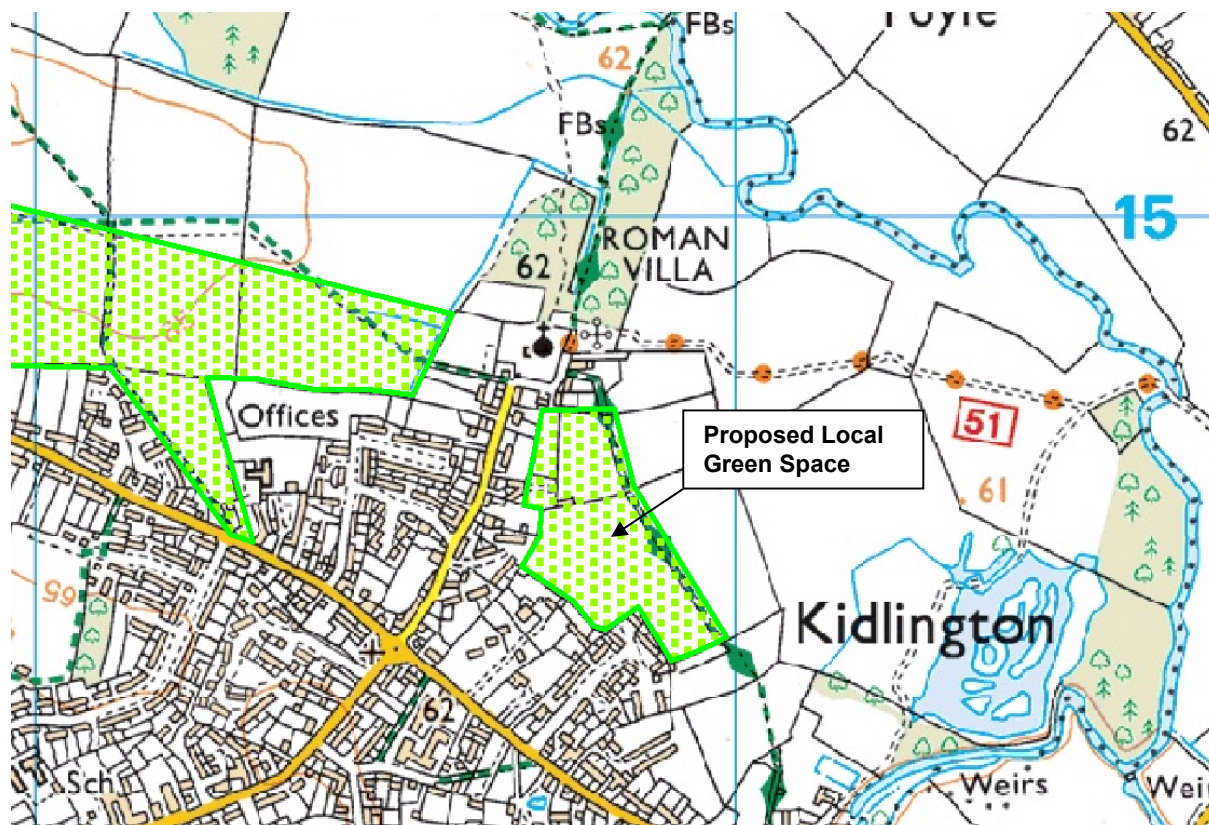
Appendix to KDW Representation 3

Originally submitted to 2nd and 3rd consultations on the Local Plan.

Proposal from Kidlington Development Watch for a Local Green Space to protect the Church Street Conservation Area and setting of St Mary's.

(Land West of the footpath from Mill-End to St Mary's Church, Kidlington).

This is one of the two specific local green spaces proposed by KDW north and north-east of the village. The site is shown on the map below. Note that it lies wholly within the Church Street Conservation Area forming part of the Church Fields Character Area.



NPPF Criteria. The area meets the NPPF criteria for designation as LGS, as follows:

Proximity to the local community

The area consists largely of paddocks for horses immediately adjacent to the built up area of Kidlington. A well used public footpath runs along its eastern boundary which can be accessed both from the historic almshouses next to St Mary's Church and at Mill End, and from the publicly accessible fields in the ownership of the Branson family. Although most of the proposed LGS is in private use and not accessible, guidance makes clear that green areas which are valued because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty may nevertheless be designated as LGS (see PPG Reference ID: 37-017-20140306). In this case, the whole area is visible from the footpath, is within the conservation area and must remain undeveloped in order to provide the fine setting for St Mary's Church and other historic building

Historic significance

The proposed LGS lies wholly within the designated Church Street Conservation Area and within that is part of the Church Fields Character Area. Discussing this character area, CDC's own Conservation Area Appraisal states that:

"The public right of way is an ideal place to see the rear of the properties on Church Street and Mill Street. The paddocks stretch right up to the high walls of the properties, and shows how easily inappropriate development to the rear can be detrimental to the conservation area. At present, the high walls and vegetation blends the line between fields and houses, and this symbiotic relationship should be protected."

The proposed LGS is also part of the setting for St. Mary's Church. Kidlington is unusual in that its parish church is situated on the extremity of the village, on a slightly elevated site at the end of an area of terraced river gravels which runs along Church Street. St Mary's Church is a large, Grade I listed building, dating back 800 years and has an exceptionally tall and slender steeple (known as 'Our Lady's Needle'). It is the final building on the northern edge of the village and is almost surrounded by fields, with the exception of houses at the northern end of Church Street. As the surrounding land is low-lying, the church is visible from considerable distances. When seen from many directions it appears to be set amongst fields.

It is essential to retain the fields in the proposed LGS to maintain both the beautiful setting of the magnificent church and the conservation area as a whole. The conservation area includes not only Church Street but extends along Mill Street and includes Mill End. It contains many old houses and Grade I and II* listed buildings including the beautiful and possibly medieval Grade II* Dovecote, Grade II* Vicarage and Grade II Church Street Farmhouse and other Grade II houses and almshouses near the church. As mentioned in the quote from the Conservation Area Appraisal, these buildings and their high walls can be appreciated from the well used and historic footpath which runs along the eastern edge of the proposed LGS. (see photo below)



The footpath itself is historic. It was the subject of an enclosure award of 1818 and should be ten feet wide throughout its length. However, it almost certainly existed in the middle ages. An eminent historian, living locally and specialising in medieval history, comments that :

“ the footpath must have been medieval and its purpose was to link the area around the church, where there was much housing, with the two mills, one on each side of the river, at Mill End, now houses (but with the mill machinery still in place, I'm told). It's highly likely that the path provided a route for manorial tenants to take their corn for milling. The ridge-and-furrow to the right of the footpath, and also running across it, proves that at one stage this was good arable land, under the plough.”

The historic ridge and furrow lies on fields to the north-east of the footpath and is a reminder of pre-enclosure Kidlington. These lead without interruption to further fields (and further ridge and furrow) and the River Cherwell itself. The openness and low-lying nature (liable to flooding) of the whole area is a key element of the landscape here.

CDC's own 2014 SHLAA rejected this site as suitable for development stating that: *“development would result in the loss of an important gap within the Church Fields Character Area and would adversely affect the setting of the Conservation Area. There would also be some detrimental impact on the character of the Mill Street area to the south.”*

Recreational value

The footpath along the edge of the proposed LGS It is now part of the Oxford Green Belt Way, a 80 km route encircling Oxford. It is extremely well used both by local people and visitors undertaking longer distance walks. Its recreational value is, of course, closely tied to the historical importance of the site, the Conservation Area Appraisal making clear how the footpath allows an appreciation of the character of the village here. The openness of the land either side of the path is essential to its enjoyment. The views from it, both north and south, of the church and other historic buildings really do take the walker back in time. The idea of a 'village in the landscape' is demonstrated here better here than anywhere else on the edge of Kidlington.



View towards St. Mary's Church and other village houses (listed) from the Public Footpath..

Beauty and Tranquility

The views here of the church and the village are indeed beautiful (see photo above) and with no roads in the vicinity, the area is also tranquil. It is on the edge of the open, undeveloped countryside of the Cherwell Valley.

Richness of Wildlife

The whole area abounds with wildlife. Badgers, foxes, roe deer, squirrels, weasels and grass snakes are to be found in the proposed LGS itself. A survey of the site undertaken in 2013 by an RSPB officer identified 27 species of breeding birds including several on the current RSPB red list (cuckoo, mistle thrush, song thrush, starling and house sparrow) and the amber list (swift and dunnock). Other species observed by local residents include grey wagtail, heron, buzzard and sparrow hawk, great spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, house martin, swallow, linnets and whitethroat as well as bats. The RSPB officer also commented that an ungrazed field within the site was rich in wild flowers and contained a wide range of plant species. Invertebrate species recorded included Brown hawker dragonfly, Gatekeeper, Large skipper and Meadow brown butterflies.

The proposed LGS also adjoins a proposed Local Wildlife Site (Kidlington Meadows, BBOWT ref 41X02) and is part of open land leading to the Cherwell Valley Conservation Target Area.

Local in Character

This proposed site is local in character and not extensive. The proposed LGS consists of a relatively small area of paddocks which is of historic significance to the community. It is essential to maintain it as Green Space in order to protect the character of the Conservation Area as is acknowledged in the Conservation Area Document and 2014 HEELA. and also for the enjoyment of users of the Public Right of Way.

Representation 4 of 4, (Part B form) from Kidlington Development Watch

Proposed Local Green Space at Stratfield Brake (Playing Fields)

Q1&2 Relevant document & sections relating to this representation

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space (page159)

Q3 Soundness and Compliance

We consider the plan to be UNSOUND in this respect. It is not justified as it has not taken account of representations made and evidence provided for this proposal.

Q4 Reasons for our objection or representation

The Council accepts our proposal to designate the Nature Reserve element of Stratfield Brake as a Local Green Space but has rejected the Sports Pitches/Playing Fields element. It does this (in the addendum to its Local Green Space Designation Study, November 2024) on the basis that it meets only one of the five example NPPF criteria and that it is protected by Green Belt designation and NPPF provisions protecting playing fields.

It is not, of course, necessary for land to meet all five criteria and in this case the playing fields by their nature are special to the local community primarily for their recreational value. Para 106b of the NPPF (Dec 2023) specifically states that, in designating LGS, recreational value includes use as a playing field.

While the two uses of Stratfield Brake have been separated by the Council in its analysis, in fact they complement each other well. The Nature Reserve wraps around three sides of the recreation area and adds to its attractiveness. At the same time, the recreation grounds provide a buffer to the nature reserve separating it from the built up area of Kidlington. It is likely that the quality and quantity of biodiversity in the reserve would decline without this buffer.

While the site is in the Green Belt it is a good example of where *“Local Green Space designation [within the Green Belt] could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community”* (National Planning Policy Guidance).

This land will also form an important element in the “Green Ring of Interconnected Green Spaces” which Kidlington Parish Council wishes to create. (See Representation 1)

Q5 The change we seek to the plan

Local Plan Policy COM25 Local Green Space should include Stratfield Brake Playing Fields in the list of Local Green Spaces and a map of the area should be included in Appendix 5 to the plan).

Q6. Yes, we wish to participate at the oral Examination into the plan.

Q7. (“Why is this necessary?”)

We (Kidlington Development Watch – KDW) consider this is necessary because of: our extensive involvement with the consultations at all stages of the Cherwell Local Plan to date; the considerable work we have undertaken to publicise the consultations ourselves; the feedback we have received from Kidlington residents; and, the large numbers of them who have endorsed this response or responded separately as a result of our efforts. (Please also see further background given in the introduction to our representations)

Appendix to KDW Representation 4. Local Green Space at Stratfield Brake

Appendix: Originally submitted to the 3rd consultation (November 2023) on the Local Plan.

Proposal from Kidlington Development Watch (KDW) for Local Green Space at Stratfield Brake

This is a proposal for a local green space at Stratfield Brake in addition to the two sites put forward by KDW to the north and north-east of the village at the Options Consultation stage. Since that consultation the County Council (site owners) have entered into discussions with Oxford United FC about the possible development of the site for a 18,000 capacity stadium and substantial commercial development. As the site is in recently confirmed Green Belt this would be contrary to the current local plan and national policy. Planning Practice Guidance states that, in the Green Belt, *“Local Green Space designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community”*. We consider that Stratfield Brake is a prime candidate for designation and wish to make this proposal in advance of any planning application that might come forward in future.

The proposed site is shown on the aerial photo below.



NPPF Criteria. The area meets the NPPF criteria for designation as LGS, as follows:

Proximity to the local community

The area is almost immediately to the south of the Garden City area of Kidlington and Gosford Hill (which is in Gosford and Water Eaton Parish). It consists of sports and recreation grounds (within the dashed line) and a nature reserve managed by the Woodland Trust. Almost all of the site is freely and easily accessible to the public due to its proximity to homes in Kidlington, public transport links and car park. There are many informal paths running through the nature reserve, while the playing fields are available for formal and

informal recreation. A footbridge gives access to the canal towpath, a further well used recreational route.

In addition the area immediately to the north is an allocated housing site in the Local Plan Partial Review (PR7b – Stratfield Farm), while to the east is a further site (PR7a- land SE of Kidlington).

Demonstrably special to a local community and holding a particular local significance

The land was acquired by the County Council many years ago, specifically to protect it from development and to maintain the gap separating Kidlington from Oxford. Subsequently it and other land surrounding Kidlington was designated as part of the Oxford Green Belt. Recently, much of the Green Belt around Kidlington has had this status removed to accommodate the housing allocations in Cherwell's Local Plan Partial Review (including PR7a and PR7b mentioned above as well as the large sites on PR6a & b). However these allocations were made on the basis that Stratfield Brake would remain undeveloped within the Green Belt, the Planning Inspector's report stating that the plan would result in "clear, defensible boundaries" to the Green Belt.

With the allocation of sites PR6a, PR6b, PR7a and PR7b for housing in the LPPR, Stratfield Brake is now almost the only remaining piece of Green Belt in the area where the gap between Kidlington and Oxford is at its narrowest. It therefore has huge significance to the local community in retaining Kidlington's identity as a distinct settlement, separate from Oxford. Immense concern has been expressed locally about the possible development of Stratfield Brake.

Recreational value

The north-eastern part of the site consists of recreation grounds managed by Kidlington Parish Council which, along with Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council, holds a long term lease on this area. There is a modern clubhouse and sports pitches. The grounds are used by a number of clubs, for example rugby, cricket and running, as well as being extensively used for informal recreation

The remainder of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Woodland Trust. Its website (<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/stratfield-brake/>) describes it as follows:

"Just a few kilometres from the centre of Oxford, Stratfield Brake is a peaceful oasis that's perfect for getting close to nature throughout the seasons. In a landscape with little accessible woodland, the woods are a joy to walk through and the wetland is great for birdwatching."

Richness of Wildlife

The Woodland Trust describes the site as follows:

"Stratfield Brake is an oasis for wildlife, especially birds. 96 different bird species have been recorded here, including both woodland and wetland species. Look out for the large rook colonies that have made Stratfield Brake their home for many years."

The wetlands provide the perfect conditions for dragonflies and water birds, and the mature woodland is a habitat for fungi, mosses, insects and bats."

"Stratfield Brake has a mixture of habitats, including mature and young woodland, open water and wet grassland. The new wet grassland area is part of a local cluster of wetlands"

which enables species to move between sites, creating ideal conditions for dragonflies, damselflies and wetland birds.”

The recreation grounds provide an important buffer to the nature reserve separating it from the built up area of Kidlington. This buffer acts as an extension to the habitat of the nature reserve and contributes significantly to the quality and quantity of biodiversity which would inevitably decline were this buffer to be removed.

Beauty and Tranquility

These are subjective and relative criteria. However the Woodland Trust’s comments sum up the value of the site well: “Just a few kilometres from the centre of Oxford, Stratfield Brake is a peaceful oasis that’s perfect for getting close to nature throughout the seasons.”



The western end of the Nature Reserve

The nature reserve is complemented by the open spaces of the recreation area which provide one of the remaining protected Green Spaces between Oxford and Kidlington offering the opportunity to feel “out in the open” while to an extent shielded from roads and other urban activities by the trees of the Woodland Trust site.



The sports grounds seen from the eastern end of the site

Local in Character

Guidance says that a LGS site should not be extensive in nature but does not define extensive. The site is not an “extensive tract of land” and has clearly defined boundaries. It is certainly not extensive when compared to the areas of land that have already been removed from the Green Belt. We are aware of examples elsewhere of similarly sized sites which local authorities have deemed suitable as LGS.

Important. We consider that this is not an “extensive area” and that the two parts of the site complement and reinforce each other. However, if the proposed area is deemed to be too large, it should not simply be rejected. Instead, consideration should be given to designating the recreation grounds alone as LGS.

NAMES OF PEOPLE ENDORSING THESE REPRESENTATIONS

Kidlington Development Watch (KDW) has followed Planning Inspectorate guidance encouraging those sharing a common view to make one joint response. We have therefore asked subscribers to our mailing list and website visitors to endorse our response by allowing us to add their details to this submission.

240 individuals have endorsed this response as listed below. We have also provided this list separately with addresses and postcodes added. The website form through which these details were collected is appended.

(names appear in the order in which people responded)

Niki Gilbert	address supplied
Katherine Hardy	address supplied
Nicholas Adams	address supplied
Mary walker	address supplied
Victoria Campbell	address supplied
Trevor Campbell	address supplied
Kelvin Markham	address supplied
Roger Freeman	address supplied
Louise Crone	address supplied
Alison Turner	address supplied
Louis Borucki	address supplied
Stevie Rudd	address supplied
H Parker	address supplied
Karen Selway	address supplied
Janis Harwood	address supplied
Shaz Yendle	address supplied
Penelope Henderson	address supplied
Margaret Donnelly	address supplied
Steve Hill	address supplied
Margaret Charlett	address supplied
Tracey Matthews	address supplied
Donna Roper	address supplied
Paul Grant	address supplied
Heidi Lancaster	address supplied
Gem Toes-Crichton	address supplied
Wendy Druce	address supplied
Nik Soheili	address supplied
Lisa Jones	address supplied
R Simpson	address supplied
Yvonne Goodgame	address supplied
Nicholas Appleby	address supplied
Rosalind Letellier	address supplied
Maddy Machin	address supplied
Lucy Wilson	address supplied
A Howes	address supplied
Lesley Budgen	address supplied
Jackie Garlick	address supplied
Kelly Williams	address supplied
Janice Bridges	address supplied
Clare Pearce	address supplied
Cliff Law	address supplied

List of people endorsing these representations.

Francesca Viner	address supplied
Laura Hatton	address supplied
Barry Coulling	address supplied
Caroline Beadle	address supplied
Patsy Hook	address supplied
Annie Haynes	address supplied
Giancarlo Tosti	address supplied
Jane Rendle	address supplied
Philippa Dalton	address supplied
Felicity Peacock	address supplied
Lindsey Axford	address supplied
Kieran Brooks	address supplied
A R Palmer	address supplied
Alexandra Holloway	address supplied
g gardner	address supplied
Henry Brougham	address supplied
Felicity Emptage	address supplied
Mark Faulkner	address supplied
Jessica Davison	address supplied
Lisa Johnston	address supplied
Joe yendle	address supplied
Carol philpott	address supplied
Daniel Leggett	address supplied
Nick Wright	address supplied
Anthony Frankland	address supplied
Peter Shaw	address supplied
Eleanor Omalley	address supplied
Kathryn Humphris	address supplied
Fiona Spink	address supplied
Sarah Court	address supplied
Gerry Townsend	address supplied
Martin Dewick	address supplied
Joan Tossell	address supplied
Tina Merry	address supplied
Maura Cordell	address supplied
Heather Greenway	address supplied
KIM LEE	address supplied
Carole Wilton	address supplied
Julia Middleton	address supplied
Philip Kemp	address supplied
Jayne Presswell	address supplied
Doug Cook	address supplied
Louisa Heywood	address supplied
Terry Tossell	address supplied
Joanne Hanson	address supplied
Graciela Iglesias-Rogers	address supplied
Paul Hughes	address supplied
Dr Mika Abu	address supplied
Geoff Herbert	address supplied
Roy Bateman	address supplied
E Bruce	address supplied
Robert Dyson	address supplied
Matt Bateman	address supplied
Fiona Garratt	address supplied

List of people endorsing these representations.

Fiona gibson	address supplied
Rosemary Lodwick	address supplied
Donal Riordan	address supplied
Roger Prince	address supplied
Delphine Penfold	address supplied
Tim del Nevo	address supplied
R Bruce	address supplied
Linda Ward	address supplied
Carol Burton	address supplied
Keiron Ward	address supplied
Catherine Morrison	address supplied
Ian Whitehead	address supplied
Roy Peach	address supplied
Claire Winlow	address supplied
SONIA MORGAN	address supplied
Kim Turpin	address supplied
Keith Dancey	address supplied
Elizabeth Moore	address supplied
Mrs Lind Peach	address supplied
Izetta Thatcher	address supplied
Margaret Harris	address supplied
Tamara Lucatz	address supplied
Matthew Green	address supplied
Gary Lucas	address supplied
Alex Duncan	address supplied
D Williams	address supplied
Christine Lodge	address supplied
Eleonora Staines	address supplied
Joyce Morris	address supplied
Prof John F MORRIS	address supplied
Ann Crane	address supplied
Norma Aubertin-Potter	address supplied
Barbara seymour	address supplied
Roger Davies	address supplied
Dr Ian Wilson	address supplied
Irene Evershed	address supplied
Geraldine Shepherd	address supplied
Marie Hamilton	address supplied
Catherine Grebenik	address supplied
John Pilgrim	address supplied
Lynn Pilgrim	address supplied
Sam Cheadle	address supplied
Gill Davidson	address supplied
Richard Lodge	address supplied
Frederick Dove	address supplied
Tom Pilgrim	address supplied
James Hamilton	address supplied
Ioana Davies	address supplied
Valerie Williams	address supplied
Dianne Bates-Brownsword	address supplied
Ayse Gungor	address supplied
Donna Bennett	address supplied
Jane Rawson	address supplied
Martin Harries	address supplied

List of people endorsing these representations.

Steven Daggitt	address supplied
David Levinger	address supplied
Marketa Levinger	address supplied
Daphne Hampson	address supplied
Frank Vreede	address supplied
Lucy Pilgrim	address supplied
Meg Geddes	address supplied
Joanna Foster	address supplied
Steve Thomas	address supplied
Kirsten Hall	address supplied
Tom Hall	address supplied
Rachel Sheppard	address supplied
Katharine Poulter	address supplied
Michele Lodge	address supplied
Hayley Tosti	address supplied
Liam weller	address supplied
Gillian Hopcroft	address supplied
Louise foster	address supplied
Heather Jenkins	address supplied
Linda Orton	address supplied
Keith Hopkins	address supplied
Freya Desebrock	address supplied
Gareth Morris	address supplied
Sarah Savage	address supplied
Norman Davies	address supplied
Suzi Sentance	address supplied
Lesley Atkinson	address supplied
Colin Hewetson	address supplied
Brenda Willoughby	address supplied
Kathy havell	address supplied
Natalie Keates	address supplied
Julian keates	address supplied
Gunnar Aegisson	address supplied
Ru Kay	address supplied
Karen Pledge	address supplied
Dr Sally Lewis	address supplied
Mary Davies	address supplied
g gelder	address supplied
Maggie	address supplied
Emma Davies Day	address supplied
Pamela Fyvie	address supplied
Brenda	address supplied
Carol Nichols	address supplied
katharine Eustace	address supplied
Bridget Atkins	address supplied
Claire rugg	address supplied
Sarah wood	address supplied
Andy Hunt	address supplied
Rita White	address supplied
Janer Rutherford	address supplied
Lucy Loveridge	address supplied
Robyn Farrall	address supplied
David Marlow	address supplied
Charles Stone	address supplied

List of people endorsing these representations.

Debbie Whitehead	address supplied
Stephen Sweet	address supplied
Grant Haly	address supplied
Peter Trowles	address supplied
Julia Trowles	address supplied
Antoinette Finnegan	address supplied
Andy Swapp	address supplied
Rob Backhouse	address supplied
JULIA TAYLOR	address supplied
Steve Cross	address supplied
Mark Smith	address supplied
Lisa Smith	address supplied
Robert Croker	address supplied
Pennie Kennedy	address supplied
Wendy Castle	address supplied
Sandra Whitfield	address supplied
John Foley	address supplied
Eliza Charlton	address supplied
Anita Ghosh	address supplied
Antony Cooper	address supplied
Justine McQuillan	address supplied
Steve Ward	address supplied
Rosie May	address supplied
James May	address supplied
Mark Butler	address supplied
Sarah Cooper	address supplied
Chriss Hemmings	address supplied
Nick Webb	address supplied
Taija Nenonen	address supplied
Frances Colles	address supplied
Lizzie Roberts	address supplied
Denise Bunce	address supplied
B Fenemore	address supplied
Wiz Bunce	address supplied
Elizabeth Omori	address supplied
Jennie Hopkins	address supplied
Alan Lodwick	address supplied

KDW Website Form completed by people endorsing our representations,

Please complete the following to endorse Kidlington Development Watch's representations to the Cherwell Local Plan 2042. These will support the Parish Council's aim of creating a "Green Ring" around the village and ask Cherwell District Council to designate three "Local Green Spaces" as described on the KDW website.

Name *

Your answer

Address *

Your answer

Postcode *

Your answer

KDW will add your name and address to a list attached to its representations on the Plan. Cherwell will make all representations publicly available and therefore your name will appear as part of our list. Contact details (address and email address) will be removed. By completing and submitting this form you are agreeing that KDW can use your personal information for this purpose