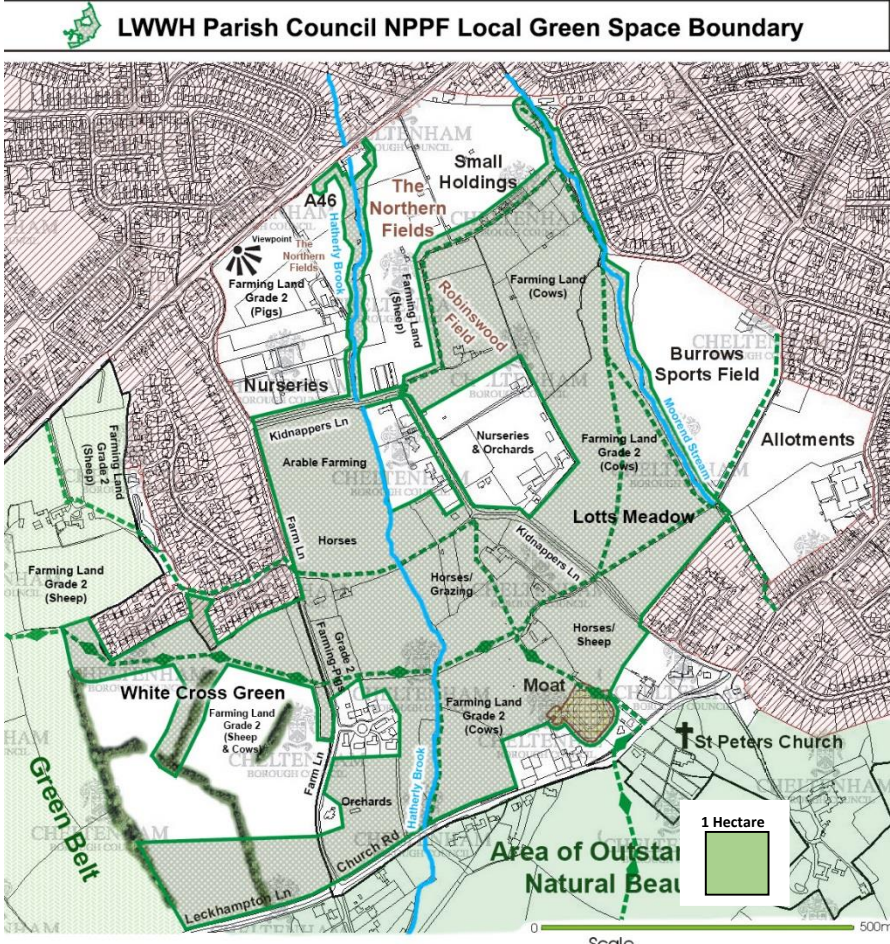
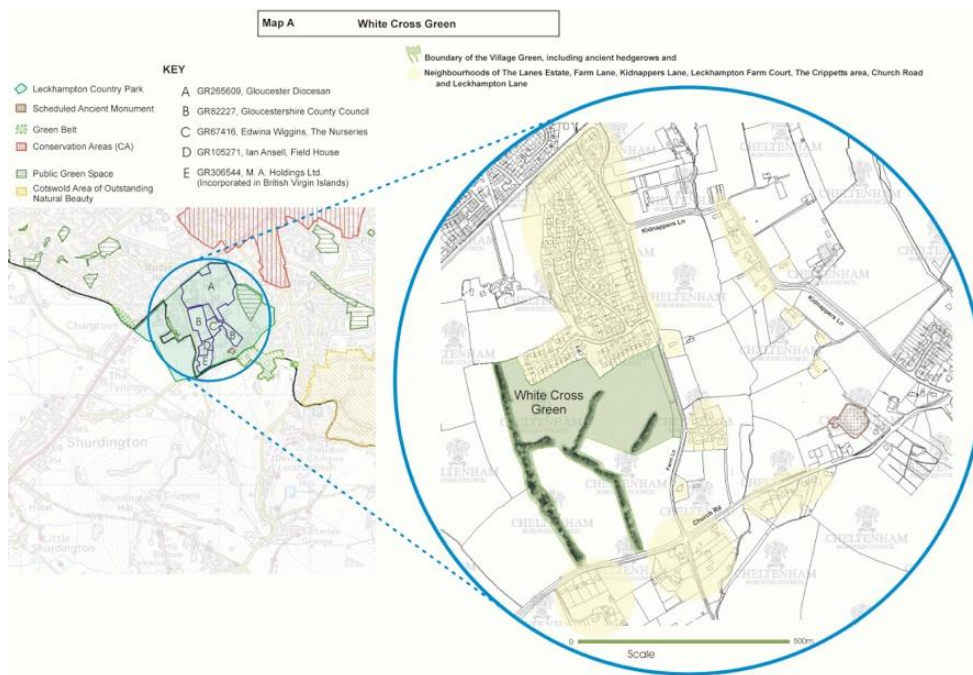


## 1. Local Green Space toolkit checklist –Leckhampton Fields

1	General Information	Tick rele evic pro
1.1	Name and address of site <i>Some sites have several names and all known names should be given</i>	
	<p>Leckhampton Fields</p> <p>The site is located in Leckhampton between the A46 (Shurdington Road) in the northwest and Church Road / Leckhampton Lane in the southeast. The field area is bounded as follows: On the northwest side by the A46 (Shurdington Road), on the north by the course of the old railway line, on the east side by Moorend Stream and the south-east boundary of Lotts Meadow. On the south side by the boundaries of properties along the north side of Church Road and Leckhampton Lane. On the west side by the west boundary of White Cross Green fields, the southern boundary of the Lanes Estate and along Farm Lane and Kidnappers Lane to the A46.</p> <p>Some areas have well known names, for example Lotts Meadow, Robinswood and White Cross. The Leckhampton fields is a generic name for the area with the high density of footpaths shown in Section 1.2 below.</p>	
1.2	Site location plan <i>The plan can be at any scale, but must show the location and boundaries of the site. Please indicate the scale.</i>	
	 <p><b>LWWH Parish Council NPPF Local Green Space Boundary</b></p> <p>The map shows the Leckhampton Fields area, bounded by the A46 (Shurdington Road) to the northwest, Church Road / Leckhampton Lane to the southeast, and the old railway line to the north. The area includes various land uses such as farming land (Grade 2), nurseries, arable farming, horses, and Lotts Meadow. The map also shows the Green Belt, Church Road, Leckhampton Lane, and St Peters Church. A scale bar indicates 0 to 500m, and a 1 Hectare area is marked.</p>	

	<p><b>Figure 1 LWWH Parish Council LGS Boundary, a higher A3 resolution map is available on request</b>  (Please note- the actual map is high resolution as provided in the IACS and can be viewed at high magnification).</p>	
1.3	<p>Organisation or individual proposing site for designation  <i>This will normally be a Town or Parish Council or a recognised community group</i></p>	
	Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council and supported by Shurdington Parish Council.	
1.4	<p>Ownership of site if known  <i>Information on land ownership can be obtained from the <a href="#">Land Registry</a>. Some land parcels are not registered however local people may know the owner.</i></p>	
	<p>This Map which was prepared for the White Cross Town &amp; Village Green application and provides the majority of the ownership details, zoom in to view the map detail.</p> <p>(Ownership shown- in the map: Gloucester Diocesan, Gloucestershire County Council, Edwina Wiggins, Ian Ansell, M. A Holdings Ltd)</p> 	
1.5	<p>Is the owner of the site aware of the potential designation? Do they support the designation? (Sites may be designated as Local Green Spaces, even if there are objections from the site owners)</p>	
	Some of the owners will be aware, we will try to contact the owners, provide evidence and request support for our LGS application.	
1.6	<p>Photographs of site</p>	
	These are all provided separately in our application, <b>Appendices 4 to 9</b> below.	
1.7	<p>Community served by the potential Local Green Space  <i>i.e. does the site serve the whole village/town or a particular geographic area or group of people?</i></p>	
	This area of Leckhampton serves the whole town, the concept is a Cheltenham Country Park which was well supported in our petition detailed in appendix 2 below.	

## REFERENCES

	<p>The LGS map of Figure 1 of the IACS (Section 1.2) shows the footpath access points to all the main urban areas, please note the new proposed footpath/link to Woodlands Road.</p> <p>See also section 3.2</p>	
2	<b>Planning History</b>	
2.1	<p>Is there currently a planning application for this site? If permitted, could part of the overall site still be used as a Green Open Space? for further information please contact Cheltenham Borough Council <a href="#">Planning Applications</a> team</p>	
	<p>There is one planning application from REDROW, reference 14/00838/FUL, with TBC for consideration.</p> <p>An application from Bovis and Miller Homes was refused by CBC in July 2014.  <a href="#">CBC Extraordinary Planning Committee - Leckhampton 31st July</a>,  Cllr Garth Barnes: <i>the refusal reasons are therefore:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CP1, CP3, CP4 and CP7</li> <li>- prematurity regarding the JCS and LGS application</li> <li>- TP1</li> <li>- NPPF Paragraphs 32, 105 and 109</li> <li>- all policies mentioned by Lufton Associates in Paragraph 5 of their letter to Committee [NPPF Paragraphs 109 and 115, Local Policies CO1 and CO2, and Policies SD7 and SD8 of the emerging JCS]</li> </ul> <p><i>This is a very comprehensive list.</i></p> <p>Here is the link to <a href="#">Mr Mike Redman's (Director - Built Environment) report, the grounds for refusal - 13/01605/OUT</a>.</p> <p>The CBC full council, on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014, voting unanimously to remove Leckhampton from the Joint Core Strategy, reference Cheltenham Borough Council, full council , <a href="#">link to minutes</a>.</p> <p><i>This Council directs that the JCS Team reconsider the status of Leckhampton and Up Hatherley as strategic sites within the JCS and explores the possibility of withdrawing these locations from the Strategy and report back to Council in April.</i></p> <p><b>Voting For 23:</b> Councillors Bickerton, Britter, Chard, Flynn, Godwin, Hall, R Hay, C Hay, Jordan, Massey, McCloskey, McKinlay, Rawson, Regan, Reid, Seacome, Smith, Stewart, Sudbury, Thornton, Walklett, Wheeler, Whyborn, <b>Against 0 No Abstentions</b></p>	
2.2	<p>Is the site allocated for development in the existing Development Plan, emerging Joint Core Strategy, Cheltenham Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan? If allocated, could part of the overall site still be used as a Green Open Space? For further information please contact Cheltenham Borough Council <a href="#">Planning Policy</a> team</p>	
	<p>Some of the area has been marked as a strategic site in the JCS, the site sustainability has been questioned by Cheltenham Borough Planning Committee in their assessment of the Bovis and Miller Homes application which was refused in July 2014.</p> <p>It is possible that the Inspector at EiP will call for changes in the plan, the housing numbers and sites for Cheltenham have been challenged by the C5 Parish Councils and other organisations. It is hoped</p>	

	<p>that the NPPF LGS application for Leckhampton will be considered on merit and the evidence presented, as the original LGS application of August 2013 predates the JCS submission.</p> <p>At the time the Parish Council LGS application was submitted in August 2013, there was no planning application for development on any of the land. The land was <u>under consideration</u> for inclusion in the Joint Core Strategy as a strategic development site. The land in Cheltenham Borough is not allocated for development in the current Cheltenham Plan. Part of the land in Shurdington Borough is identified in the Tewkesbury Plan as being potentially suitable for development subject to the development being sustainable. An application to build on the land was rejected at appeal by the planning inspectorate in 2009 on grounds that development on the site was not sustainable because it would be isolated from the urban area; this was also the view of the Government Office South West.</p>										
3	Size, scale and “local nature” of proposed Local Green Space										
3.1	Area of proposed site										
	<p>The area of the LGS is defined on the Map given in Figure 1 of the IACS – see Section 1.2.</p> <p>The LGS Boundary has been downsized and re-appraised to identify where development at a level appropriate to a strategic site might cause the least harm to the landscape and amenity value. The findings from this re-appraisal are set out in Appendix 1, the map of figure 1 has a marked scale and the key shows 1 hectare for reference.</p> <p>Approximate Leckhampton LGS Areas, totalling 43 Hectares:</p> <table><tr><td>Lotts Meadow</td><td>10Ha</td></tr><tr><td>Robinswood Fields</td><td>7 Ha</td></tr><tr><td>Central Fields</td><td>18 Ha</td></tr><tr><td>White Cross</td><td>4 Ha</td></tr><tr><td>AONB Buffer</td><td>4 Ha</td></tr></table> <p>(south of White Cross)</p>	Lotts Meadow	10Ha	Robinswood Fields	7 Ha	Central Fields	18 Ha	White Cross	4 Ha	AONB Buffer	4 Ha
Lotts Meadow	10Ha										
Robinswood Fields	7 Ha										
Central Fields	18 Ha										
White Cross	4 Ha										
AONB Buffer	4 Ha										
3.2	<p>Is the site an “extensive tract of land”?</p> <p><i>(Extensive tracts of land cannot be designated as Local Green Space)</i></p> <p><i>e.g. how large is it in comparison to other fields; groups of fields; areas of land in the vicinity etc.? Does the site “feel” extensive or more local in scale?</i></p>										
	<p>Cheltenham’s MP, Martin Horwood, has provided some important guidance to the council on what the NPPF defines as an ‘<i>extensive tract of land</i>’ (para 77), the ministerial view is that the LGS fall into the same category as those designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the example being given of Charlton Kings Common.</p> <p>There are 143 SSSI’s in Gloucestershire and that two of the nearest are (1) Leckhampton Hill &amp; Charlton Kings Common and (2) Crickley Hill &amp; Barrow Wake which cover 63ha and 55ha respectively.</p> <p>This area of land is local to the village of Leckhampton, the first settlement in this area of Gloucestershire and has been protected for many generations. Importantly this area is very accessible and close to the urban areas that it serves. The LGS is local to Leckhampton but enjoyed by residents of other wards in the town, there is no other area in Cheltenham that provided the same density of footpaths with such an attractive rural character<sup>[1 &amp; 2]</sup> and tranquillity.</p>										



	<p>The site serves the Cheltenham community on all four sides, please see the map of figure 1. To the northwest it serves residents in Warden Hill, with the existing footpath and the new proposed link to Woodlands Road and along the Shurdington Road. They mainly use the access track from the A46 to the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path and thence to Robinswood Field or to Lotts Meadow, or round the Circular Walk.</p> <p>To the north and north-east it serves residents in Leckhampton who access the land either by the footpath from the A46 along Moorend Stream, or from several roads adjacent to Moorend Stream, or from Burrows Field, which has the car park that is used by people coming from further afield.</p> <p>From the east it serves residents in Leckhampton Village and to the east of that along Leckhampton Road, Pilley and Old Bath Road, who access the site via the footpath from Church Road along Moorend Stream, via Kidnappers Lane, via the footpath (Cheltenham Circular Path) from St Peters Church carpark past the Medieval moat,</p> <p>To the south, it serves residents along Church Road and Leckhampton Lane and to the west it serves residents along Farm Lane and the north end of Kidnappers Lane and residents in the Lanes Estate. The network of footpaths on the land also connects to footpaths up Leckhampton Hill.</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework para 52 is helpful in providing guidance on potential urban extensions. <i>‘The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements <b>or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities</b>. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development.’</i></p> <p>The Leckhampton LGS application provides just such an opportunity, and is very well supported by the community.</p>
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## References

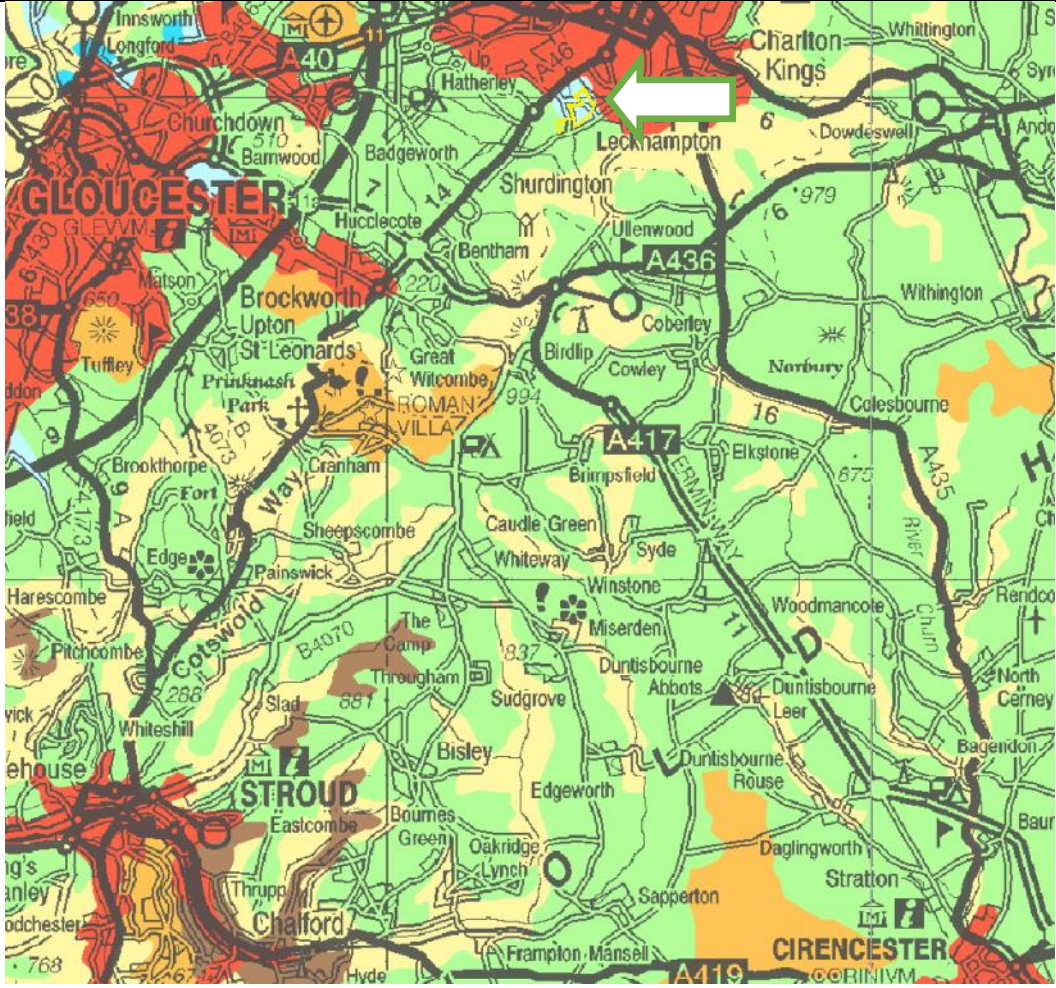
1. Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013, [available on this link](#)
2. Land at Farm Lane, Church Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Final Report, Landscape Design Associates – July 2003, [here](#)
3. Joint Core Strategy Site Assessment/Capacity Testing, Final Report AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited October 2012

## Sections below

### Maps

[Figure 2 Leckhampton Ecology Map, Extract from Leckhampton with Warden Hill \(LWWH\) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013](#)

[Figure 3 Halcrow JCS Flood Risk Assessment – Leckhampton](#)

	 <p>The LGS boundary is outlined above in yellow on the DEFRA South West Region 1:250000 Series Agricultural Land Classification map, the LGS is local the village of Leckhampton but serves the whole town being so well connected to the urban area. This map also shows the rarity of high quality agricultural land in Gloucestershire, perhaps this explains why this area has been protected for over 30 generations, <b>please consider the synergy between this LGS application, future food production and the proximity to the UoG Park Campus for agricultural research.</b></p>	
3.3	<p>Is the proposed site “local in character”?  <i>e.g. does the site feel as though it is part of the local area? And why? How does it connect physically, visually and socially to the local area? What is your evidence?</i></p>	
	<p>It is part of Leckhampton Village with a rich history, please see reference 1 and 2 for detailed evidence plus section 3.2</p> <p>The fields have great charm and beauty with many fine views, reference 2 provides a detailed landscape and visual appraisal by Landscape Design Associates commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council. They are integral to the character of Leckhampton and to what makes South Cheltenham an asset to the town and a wonderful location for a country park. Question 4 in the public consultation questionnaire at appendix 2 list many of the noteworthy features.</p> <p>Please access reference 1, Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 for information on:</p>	

**Figure 4** DEFRA Agricultural Land Classification, DEFRA website – Leckhampton

	<p>Foreword<sup>[1]</sup>, Executive Summary<sup>[1]</sup> and section 2<sup>[1]</sup>- Some of the important background on Leckhampton, planning and the LGS application.</p> <p><b>Please access reference 1 for the following information on the LGS application:</b></p> <p>3 LOCAL GREEN SPACE APPLICATION..... 14</p> <p>3.1 The History of Leckhampton..... 17</p> <p>3.1.1 The Fields Beneath ..... 20</p> <p>3.2 Leckhampton Ecology, Wildlife &amp; Habitat ..... 24</p> <p>3.3 The Natural Environment White Paper &amp; the State of Nature ..... 27</p> <p>3.4 Material Reasons for Avoiding Large Scale Development in Leckhampton ..... 30</p> <p>3.4.1 Traffic Congestion &amp; Poor Air Quality on the Shurdington &amp; Church Roads..... 31</p> <p>3.4.2 Flood Risk to Warden Hill &amp; the Leckhampton Lanes ..... 33</p> <p>3.4.3 Landscape and Visual Impact of Large Scale Development in Leckhampton &amp; Shurdington .. 34</p> <p>3.4.4 Previous Inspectors Reports &amp; Enquiries ..... 36</p> <p>3.5 What a Leckhampton Local Green Space means to the Community and Town..... 38</p> <p>3.5.1 Leckhampton is so well connected to the Urban Area ..... 40</p> <p>3.5.2 The Natural Choice ..... 41</p> <p>References</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Photographs of various parts of the site and from the Leckhampton Circular Walks are attached at appendix 5, the landscape appraisal <sup>[2]</sup> and photographic links to the area <sup>[1 Map of Appendix 1, yellow boxes are links to photographs]</sup>.</p> <p>The fields also have great landscape importance to the nationally famous views from Leckhampton Hill and also from Charlton King Common. Leckhampton Hill is one of the great assets of Cheltenham, which along with the architecture and the many trees adds much to Cheltenham’s reputation and quality of life.</p> <p>The area has been inhabited since Roman times and probably earlier, Crickley Hill to the south being inhabited as far back as 5000 BC. Leckhampton Court and St Peter’s Church are early 14<sup>th</sup> century although part of the Church is much older. The Moat belonged to a second Medieval manor, now lost. On the fields northwest of the Moat there are three cottages that were part of old Leckhampton. Further information on the history is contained in the August 2013 LGS application (Reference 1). This also contains details about the ecology, wildlife and habitats in the fields.</p>	
4	<b>Need for Local Green Space</b>	
4.1	<p>Is there a need for a local green space in this location?</p> <p><i>e.g. is there a shortage of accessible greenspace in the area? Is there a village needs survey or parish plan that provides evidence of that need.</i></p> <p><i>Further information – Natural England (<a href="#">Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard</a>)</i></p>	
	<p>There is a shortage of public open space, amenity, and children’s play space serving Farm Lane, the Lanes, Nourse Close and Brizen Lane. The existing development fails the 6 acres per thousand residents planning guidelines, the area of White Cross is requested as open public space, see LGS map, it also serves the main Leckhampton and Cheltenham circular footpath.</p> <p>Reference 1 gives our view and the evidence why access to natural open space is so important to the community<sup>[1 section 3.5.2 The Natural choice]</sup></p>	
5	<b>Evidence to show that “the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</b>	

	<i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
5.1	How far is the site from the community it serves? Is the site within 2km of the local community? <i>Possible evidence – a map to show that distance</i>	
	Please refer to the scaled LGS map of figure 1 in Q1.2 above and from IACS, reference [1] section 3.5.1 <i>‘Leckhampton is so well connected to the Urban Area’</i>  Please also see Q3.2 above.	
5.2	Are there any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes? <i>e.g. railway line; main road</i> <i>Possible evidence – a map to show any potential barriers and how those can be overcome.</i>	
	The proposed LGS is well served by a high density of public footpaths (please refer to the LGS map <sup>[figure 1 in the IACS]</sup> in Q1.2 above) and access it provided from all adjoining urban areas.	
6	<b>Evidence to show that the green area is “demonstrably special to a local community”</b> <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
6.1	Evidence of support from Parish or Town Council <i>e.g. letter of support; Council minutes</i>	
	Reference Appendix 2 and section 2.1.	
6.2	Evidence of support from other local community groups or individuals. <i>e.g. letters of support; petitions; surveys etc.</i>	
	Appendix 2: Petitions completed regarding the importance of Leckhampton Fields to local people in 2011, with over 2000 signatures, and in 2013, with 1000 signatures  A public consultation survey was completed in January 2015, to support this application and demonstrate how the Leckhampton Fields are important to local people. A total of 774 completed forms of support for the LGS application were returned and are made available to the council, 1491 town residents (approximately 1350 adults and 140 children), please see section 7.2 and appendix 3 for the initial analysis.  The LGS public meeting held at Leckhampton Primary School on the 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2015 was very well attended with an estimated 200 people packing the hall, local borough and county councillors and our MP gave their views.	
6.3	Evidence of support from community leaders <i>e.g. letters of support from Ward Members; County Councillors; MP etc.</i> <i>Further information on these contact details – <a href="#">Cheltenham Borough Council</a>, <a href="#">Gloucestershire County Council</a>, <a href="#">House of Commons</a></i>	
	Requests for support have been made and will be provided separately.  Letters from: MP Martin Horwood – Appendix 11, County Councillor Ian Dobie (Appendix 2)	



6.4	Evidence of support from other groups <i>e.g. letters of support from organisations such as Campaign to Protect Rural England; local amenity societies; local schools etc.</i>	
	Requests for support have been made and will be provided separately. Letter from chair of Leckhampton Local History Society Eric Miller – Appendix 2	
7	<b>Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance, for example because of its <u>beauty</u>,” (if applicable)</b> <b><i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i></b>	
7.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES evidence is provided <sup>[1 &amp; 2]</sup>	
7.2	Describe why the community feels that the site has a particular local significance for its beauty.	
	<p>The public petitions submitted to protect the land have over 2000 signatories in one case and over 1000 in the other, and these were only partial consultations. So there is no doubt that local people believe the land is very special. It has great charm and beauty with many fine views. The appendices 5 to 9 show photographic evidence of this and of the walks and field that people use.</p> <p>Reference 2 provides a detailed landscape and visual appraisal by Landscape Design Associates commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council. They are integral to the character of Leckhampton and to what makes South Cheltenham an asset to the town and a wonderful location for a country park.</p> <p>The fields also have great landscape importance to the nationally famous views from Leckhampton Hill and also from Charlton King Common. Leckhampton Hill is one of the great assets of Cheltenham, which along with the architecture and the many trees adds much to Cheltenham’s reputation and quality of life. Evidence from the photographic assessment of the impact of development on the view from Leckhampton Hill and from the Cotswold Way National Trail is attached at appendix 4.</p> <p>Question 4 in the public consultation questionnaire at Appendix 3 list many of the noteworthy features and 89% of respondents valued Leckhampton Fields for the views of Leckhampton Hill and 84% valued the views across the fields, 1491 people participated in this survey in January 2015, a very high percentage of residents given the short 10 day consultation period.</p> <p>Information is provided in Reference 1- ‘Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 – Section 3.4.3 – Landscape and visual impact of large scale development in Leckhampton and Shurdington.</p>	
7.3	Site visibility <i>e.g. is it easy to see the site from a public place? Are there long-distance views of the site? Are there views of the site from any key locations?</i>	
	Please reference the Land at Farm Lane, Church Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Final Report, Landscape Design Associates – July 2003 (Reference 2)	

	Joint Core Strategy Site Assessment/Capacity Testing, Final Report AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited October 2012 (Reference 3)	
7.4	Is the site covered by any landscape or similar designations? <i>e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Conservation Area; Special Landscape Area</i> Further information – <a href="#">Cheltenham Borough Council</a> ; <a href="#">Natural England</a> ;	
	The LGS borders the Greenbelt to the south west and the AONB to the south.	
7.5	Is the site (or the type of site) specifically mentioned in any relevant landscape character assessments or similar documents? <i>e.g. Cotswolds AONB landscape character assessment. Further information – <a href="#">Cheltenham Borough Council</a>; <a href="#">Natural England</a>; <a href="#">Cotswolds Conservation Board</a></i>	
	Yes See reference 2 - Land at Farm Lane, Church Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Final Report, Landscape Design Associates – July 2003  See Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 – Section 3.4.4 - Previous Inspectors Reports & Enquiries	
7.6	Does the site contribute to the setting of a historic building or other special feature?	
	Yes- See reference - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 – Section 3.1	
7.7	Is the site highlighted in literature or art? <i>e.g. is the site mentioned in a well-known poem or shown in a famous painting?</i>	
	There is a reference to the poet James Elroy Flecker in the History of Cheltenham, he refers to the beauty of the 'Leckhampton Lanes' in one of his poems, and in 'November Eves' makes mention of Leckhampton Hill.	
8	Evidence to show that the green area “holds a particular local significance for example because of its <u>historic significance</u> ” (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
8.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES - See Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 – Section 3.1	
8.2	Are there any historic buildings or remains on the site? <i>e.g. listed buildings; scheduled ancient monuments ; registered parks and gardens; war memorials; other historic remains or structures.</i> Further information – <a href="#">Cheltenham Borough Council</a> ; <a href="#">English Heritage</a> ; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record</a> ; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Archives</a> ; local history society;	
	There is one ancient monument – the moat of a medieval manor. There are three cottages within the LGS that are listed buildings. The oldest is Moat Cottage which dates from the 16 <sup>th</sup> century. This is	

Figure 5 MAFF Agricultural Land Classification – Leckhampton

	<p>pictured on the front cover of Reference 1- Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013.</p> <p>Along the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk are Leckhampton Manor and St Peter's Church, both of which date from about 1315, although St Peters has some Saxon footings having been built on the site of an earlier church.</p> <p>In the January 2015 survey of Leckhampton Fields, completed by 1491 people (Appendix 3), 34% of respondents valued the mediaeval moat and 39% the mediaeval cottages in Leckhampton Fields.</p>	
8.3	<p>Are there any important historic landscape features on the site?  <i>e.g. old hedgerows; ancient trees; historic ponds or historic garden features</i>  <i>Further information – Cheltenham Borough Council; <a href="#">English Heritage</a>; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record</a>; local history society</i></p>	
	<p>There are many ancient hedgerows and trees within the site  See Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013 – Section 3.1 The History of Leckhampton, 3.1.1 The Fields beneath and 3.2 Leckhampton Ecology, Wildlife and Habitat.</p> <p>See also Reference 2 Land at Farm Lane, Church Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Final Report, Landscape Design Associates – July 2003</p>	
8.4	<p>Did the site play an important role in the historic development of the village or town?  <i>e.g. the old site of the town railway station; the old garden for the manor house etc.</i></p>	
	<p>Leckhampton Village and Leckhampton Court predates Cheltenham and was one of the first settlements in this area, this is due to the fertility of the soil, drought resistance and water supply from Leckhampton Hill, please reference figures 3, 4 and 5 - IACS Maps below.</p>	
8.5	<p>Did any important historic events take place on the site?</p>	
	<p>Not Known</p>	
8.6	<p>Do any historic rituals take place on the site?  <i>e.g. well-dressing; maypole dancing etc.</i></p>	
	<p>Not Known.</p>	
9	<p>Evidence to show that the green area "holds a particular local significance, for example because of its <u>recreational value</u> (including as a playing field)", (if applicable)  <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i></p>	
9.1	<p>Is this criteria relevant to this site ?</p>	
	<p>YES</p>	
9.2	<p>Is the site used for playing sport?  <i>If so what sport? How long has it been used for sports provision? Is this sports provision free or is a club membership required?</i>  <i>Further information – <a href="#">Sport England</a></i></p>	

	The area of Lotts Meadow and White Cross has been used for informal sports and general recreation. The area of White Cross has been requested for an amenity area and will hopefully provide an amenity for ball games etc.	
9.3	Are the public able to physically access the site? <i>e.g. are there any public rights of way across the site? Or adjacent to the site? Has access been allowed on a discretionary basis? Is there public access to the whole site or only part? Is there good disabled access to the site? (A site can still be designated even if there is no public access.)</i> <i>Further information – <a href="#">Gloucestershire County Council</a></i>	
	Yes, please refer to the LGS Map, figure 1 of the IACS (Section 1.2 above). This map shows the main Leckhampton footpath and the high density of footpaths providing access to all parts of the LGS from the surrounding urban areas. This is one of the compelling advantages to this LGS site, it provides green space where it is most valued, close to the large urban areas that it serves.  Appendix 5 contains a description of footpaths and walks. In the January 2015 survey, completed by 1491 people, 774 completed forms (Appendix 3) 84% of respondents use KL/FL/CR triangle, 70% use Lott's Meadow, 63% the paths in smallholdings, 59% Moorend Stream Path, 41% White Cross and 52% the circular walk. (Appendix 3)	
9.4	Is the site used by the local community for informal recreation? And since when? <i>e.g. dog walking; sledging; ball games etc</i>	
	Yes, for many generations.  The petition in 2011 attracted 2,000 signatures agreeing that people '... highly value easy accessibility for informal recreation.....' in Leckhampton fields  The footpaths and fields accessible to the public are heavily used for walking and dog walking. The public consultation on the proposal in January 2015 has asked residents to say how and how often they use the land and the survey results from 1491 respondents show that 31% of respondents use the fields/paths daily or almost daily, while 37% use them a few times per week or many times per month.  84% of respondents valued the Leckhampton Fields for the opportunity to exercise.  86% of respondents use the fields for walking, 35% for dog walking, 22% for running/jogging. 44% of respondents use the fields with children and 13% for playing games. (Appendix 3)	
10	Evidence to show that the green area "holds a particular local significance, for example because of its <u>tranquillity</u> " (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
10.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES	
10.2	Do you consider the site to be tranquil? <i>e.g. are there are any roads or busy areas close by?</i>	
	Yes, please refer to references 1 and 2,	



	The public consultation survey in January 2015, completed by 1491 people (Appendix 3) showed that 82% of respondents particularly valued the rural atmosphere of Leckhampton Fields and 76% valued the tranquillity offered.	
10.3	Is the site within a recognised tranquil area? e.g. within the <a href="#">Campaign to Protect Rural England</a> 's tranquillity maps	
	Have requested CPRE to advice and comment on the Leckhampton LGS application in connection with their tranquillity maps.	
11	<b>Evidence to show that the green area "holds a particular local significance, for example because of the richness of its wildlife"; (if applicable)</b> <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
11.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES	
11.2	Is the site formally designated for its wildlife value? <i>e.g. as a site of special scientific interest; a key wildlife site etc</i> Further information - <a href="#">Natural England</a> ; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records</a>	
	See Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013, Section 3.2 Leckhampton Ecology, Wildlife and Habitat	
11.3	Are any important habitats or species found on the site? <i>e.g. habitats and species listed in the UK priority habitats and species lists or Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plans or protected species or on the red/amber lists of birds of conservation concern.</i> Further information - <a href="#">Natural England</a> ; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records</a> ; <a href="#">National Biodiversity Network</a> ; <a href="#">RSPB</a>	
	See 11.2 and Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013, Sections 3.2 Leckhampton Ecology and 3.3 The Natural Environment.  See Appendix 10 - The Leckhampton Environmental Report, 10 Year Bird Survey by Tony Meredith which shows the LGS is habitat for more than 45 species, of which 17 are red or amber listed, which is a testament to its importance and need for protection.	
11.4	What other wildlife of interest has been found on the site? Further information - <a href="#">Natural England</a> ; <a href="#">Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records</a> ; <a href="#">National Biodiversity Network</a> ;	
	Please See Reference 1 - Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013, Sections 3.2 Leckhampton Ecology and 3.3 The Natural Environment.  The petition in 2011 attracted 2,000 signatures agreeing that people '... highly value..., wildlife, environmental and ecological interest.' in Leckhampton Fields.	

#### **Appendix 1 Rationale for what we are proposing**

	The public consultation survey in January 2015, completed by 1491 people (Appendix 3) showed that 62% of respondents valued the wildflowers, 75% the trees, 57% the hedgerows, 50% the wilderness area, 69% the birds, 58% the wild animals. 56% valued the streams and 36% valued the ponds.	
11.5	Is the site part of a long term study of wildlife by members of the local community? <i>e.g. long-term monitoring of breeding birds.</i>	
	<p>It's certainly used by many in the community for viewing wildlife, long term with the bird surveys. See Q 11.4 above and Appendix 10. The ancient hedgerows and two water courses are DEFRA protected habitats and are both rich in wildlife, the university has completed some ecology work in Leckhampton, and we will seek further advice on this question.</p> <p>The Perry Orchard to the south, on the corner of Farm Lane and Church Road has recently been awarded TPO status, this is extremely important to protect the habitat, more details can be provided if required.</p> <p>Hedgerows, traditional orchards and water courses are listed as Priority Habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the preservation of these habitats within the site is therefore promoted.</p>	
12	Evidence to show that the green area "holds a particular local significance, for <u>any other reason</u> "; (if applicable) <i>Please indicate what evidence you have provided against each point.</i>	
12.1	Is this criteria relevant to this site ?	
	YES	
12.2	Are there any other reasons why the site has a particular local significance for the local community?	
	<p>Leckhampton Village and the surrounding land is of course mentioned in the in the doomsday book of 1086 the settlement was divided among three landowners and recorded as Lechametone, meaning 'homestead where garlic or leeks were grown'. although a reinterpretation may point to general vegetables.</p> <p>Please see references [1] and [2] for the complete answer to this open question.</p> <p>Appendices 2 and 3 have details of petitions and surveys that provide evidence and demonstrate how much the Leckhampton Fields are valued by local people</p>	

#### [Appendix 2](#) Petitions signed by local to protect the Leckhampton Fields in 2011 and 2013

#### [Appendix 3](#) Public consultation questionnaire and results

#### [Appendix 4](#) - 2014 study on the effects of development on the views from Leckhampton Hill

#### [Appendix 5](#) – Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk

#### [Appendix 6](#) – The Smallholdings

#### [Appendix 7](#) - Robinswood Field

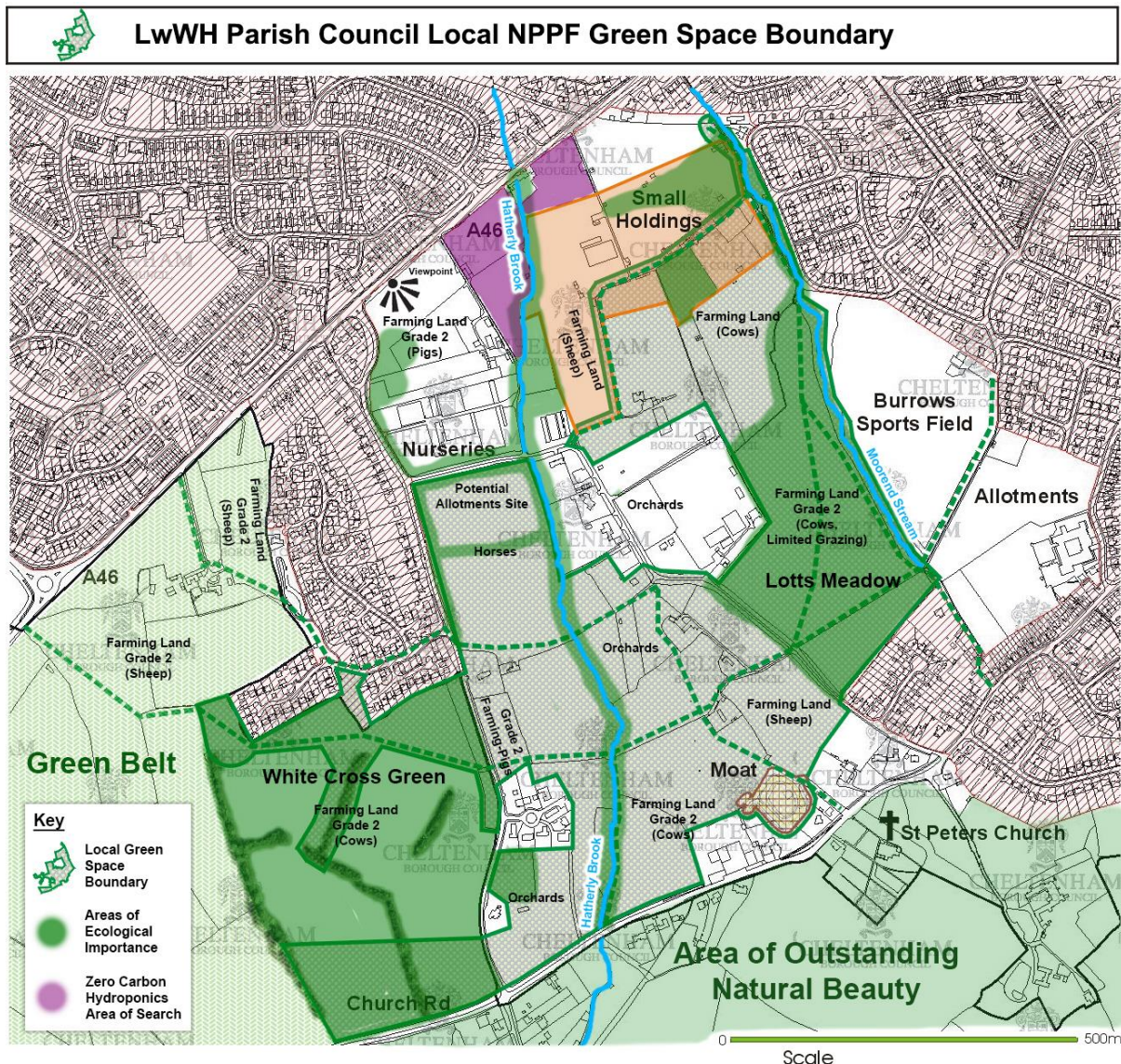
[Appendix 8](#) – Lotts Meadow

[Appendix 9](#) - White Cross Green Fields

[Appendix 10](#): Leckhampton Environmental Report

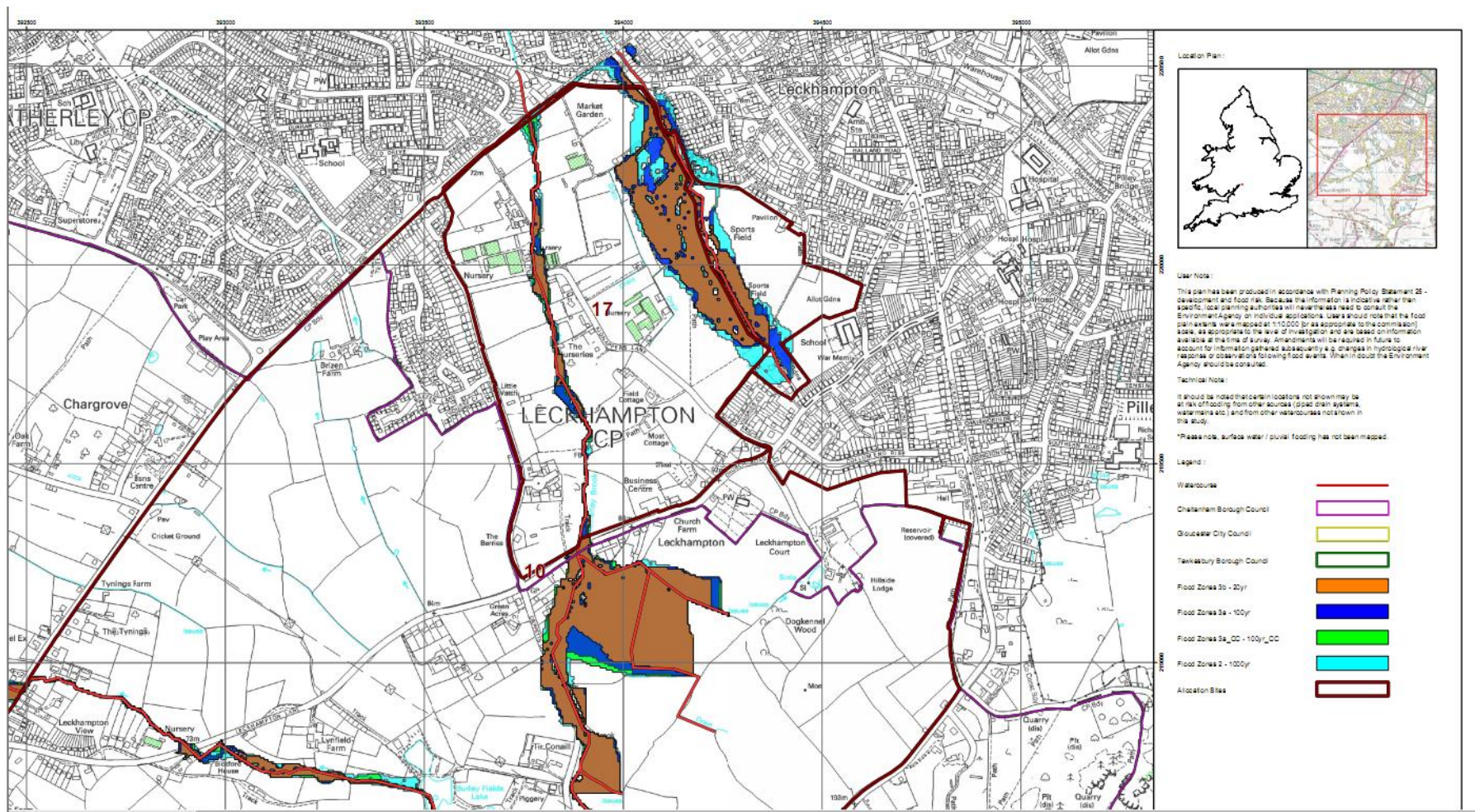
[Appendix 11](#): Letter of support from Martin Harwood MP

## LECKHAMPTON MAPS

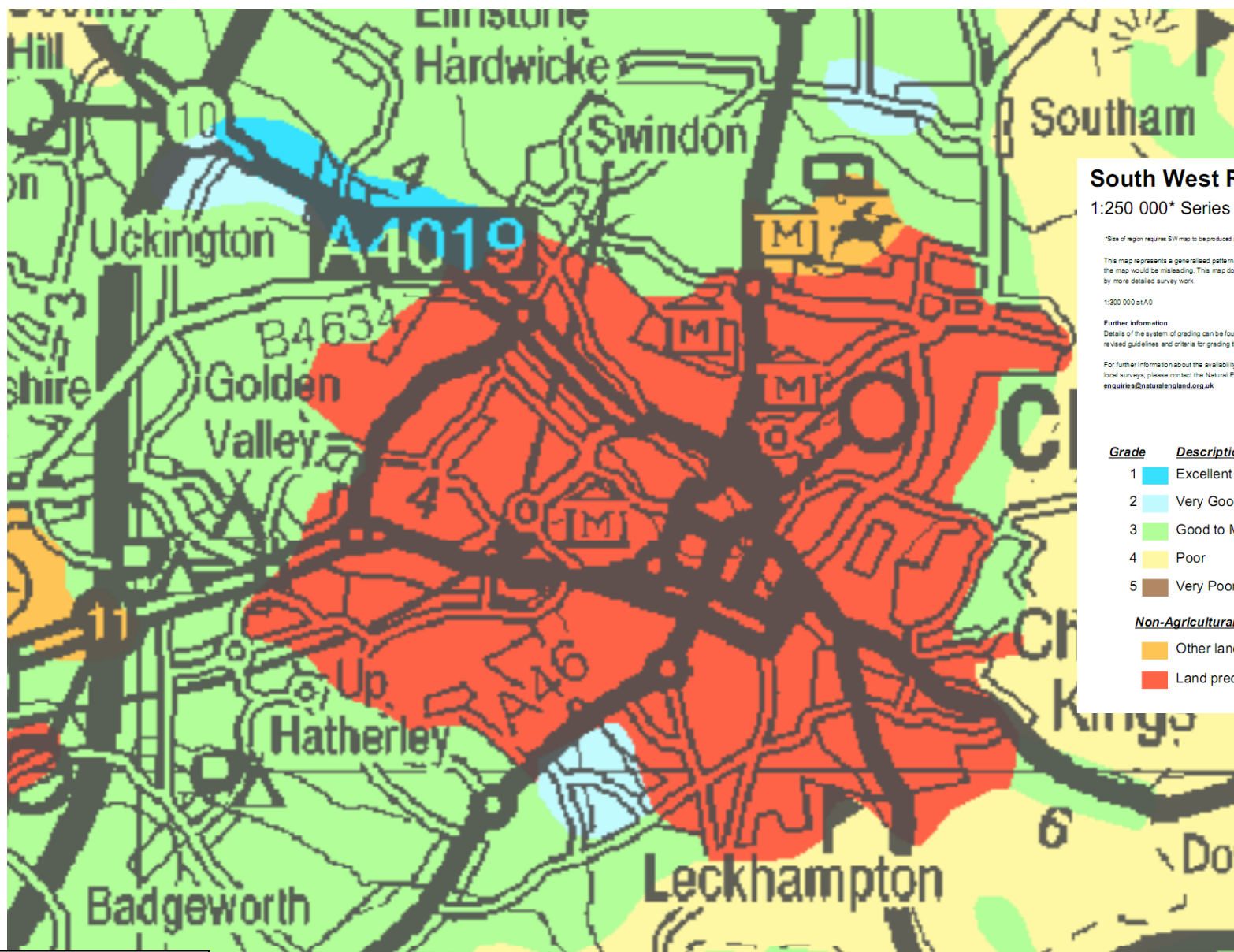


**Figure 2 Leckhampton Ecology Map, Extract from Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) and Shurdington Parish Council Neighbourhood Concept Plan and Local Green Space application, August 2013**





**Figure 3 Halcrow JCS Flood Risk Assessment – Leckhampton**



## South West Region

1:250 000\* Series Agricultural Land Classification

\*Size of region requires SW map to be produced at 1:300 000

This map represents a generalised pattern of land classification grades and any enlargement of the scale of the map would be misleading. This map does not show subdivisions of Grade 3 which are normally mapped by more detailed survey work.

1:300 000 at A0

### Further information

Details of the system of grading can be found in: Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

For further information about the availability of Agricultural Land Classification data, including more detailed local surveys, please contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3076 or e-mail [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

### Grade Description

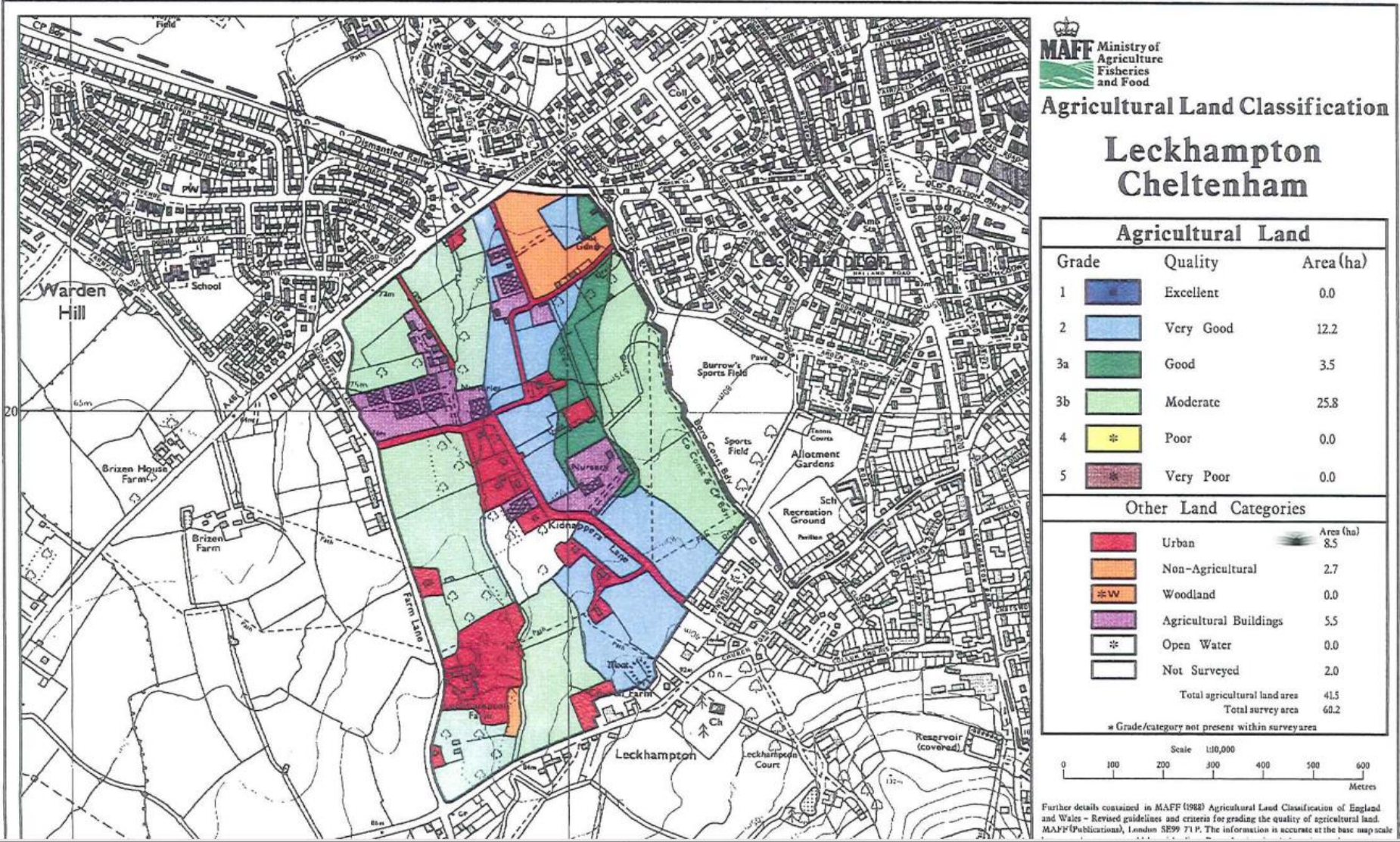
- 1 ■ Excellent
- 2 ■ Very Good
- 3 ■ Good to Moderate
- 4 ■ Poor
- 5 ■ Very Poor

### Non-Agricultural Land

- Other land primarily in non-agricultural use
- Land predominantly in urban use



Figure 5 MAFF Agricultural Land Classification - Leckhampton





## **Proposal and rationale for Leckhampton Fields Local Green Space**

### **1. Background**

In August 2013, Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council and Shurdington Parish Council jointly submitted a Neighbourhood Plan Concept and Local Green Space application to Cheltenham Borough Council and to Tewkesbury Borough Council (reference 1). The land proposed as Local Green Space (LGS) covered all of the Leckhampton Fields, both in Cheltenham Borough and in Tewkesbury Borough. The fields at Brizen Farm were subsequently removed from the proposed LGS as they are green belt, but the Tewkesbury Borough land west of Farm Lane is still included. This land is often referred to as White Cross Green or by the now out-dated Tewkesbury Borough planning designation SD2. Tewkesbury Borough Council does not wish at this time to assess LGS applications and has agreed that Cheltenham Borough Council will assess all of the Leckhampton Fields LGS application and will recommend to Tewkesbury Borough what decision should be taken with regard to the White Cross Green site.

The major part of the Leckhampton Fields lies in Cheltenham Borough and has an area of about 62 hectares. The land was last considered in a planning inspection in 1993. The planning inspector concluded that all of the Leckhampton Fields should be protected from development - *'because of their varied topography, landscape history, dense network of footpaths, and pedestrian access from several residential districts.'* And he said that *'it would be very sad indeed if development were to proceed at Leckhampton.'* A decade later in 2003, an expert study commissioned by the Cheltenham Borough Council reached the same conclusion suggesting that the land might be incorporated into the AONB (reference 2). In 2012, the JCS Landscape, Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design report also showed how special this land is - more so than any other site considered in the JCS.

The conclusion both in 1993 and in 2003 was that the landscape was very sensitive and that any major development would undermine the special quality of the area. This is one reason that the Neighbourhood Plan Concept submitted in August 2013 proposed that all of the area should be included in the LGS.

The Leckhampton Field have been the subject of a number of major planning applications over the past 45 year, all of which have been rejected both by Cheltenham and Tewkesbury borough councils. However, in 2005 suggestions about developing on land south of Cheltenham arose from the emerging South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The Gloucester-Cheltenham-Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) began in 2008 as a RSS implementation plan. Although the RSS was set aside in 2010 it was not formally revoked, for legal reasons, until 2013 and it has had a substantial influence on the JCS. Cheltenham Borough Council has consistently voted to protect the Leckhampton Fields and there have also been two petitions from local people for protecting the land, one in July 2011 and the second in December 2013 (appendix 2). Nevertheless, the emerging JCS has persisted in identifying the Leckhampton Fields as a potential strategic development site.

In September 2013, Bovis Homes and Miller Homes jointly submitted an outline application for development of 25.7 hectares of the Leckhampton Fields land to provide up to 650 dwellings plus a commercial centre and a primary school. This application was rejected by Cheltenham Borough Council on 31 July 2014. There were many grounds for this rejection including the major traffic problems involved in any development on the Leckhampton Fields. But undoubtedly the quality of the landscape and amenity value and the damage that development would do to this were also important factors.

The White Cross Green, the northern part of former SD2 site in Tewkesbury Borough has an area of 15.4 hectares and has been the subject of several planning applications. These have been refused and rejected on appeal, most recently in 2009. The site is however currently allocated for development, at least in part, in the Tewkesbury Plan. In 2014, the developers Redrow submitted an application (TBC 14/00838/FUL) to build on the whole site. This application is currently with Tewkesbury Borough Council for determination.

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in its Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design Report 2012 classified all four of the fields on the White Cross Green (SD2) site as being of the highest landscape sensitivity and recommended there should be no development at all, or at most building only on one field at the north-east end of the site. A major reason for this recommendation is the serious affect that development on the site would have on the view from the nationally renowned viewpoint on Leckhampton Hill. This is discussed in more detail with photographic evidence in Appendix 4. Despite this recommendation not to allow development on the White Cross Green (SD2) land, some 11.3 hectares of the site have been earmarked for development in the JCS submitted for inspection in October 2014, with just a buffer strip of 4.1 hectares along the south side of the site kept as green land to provide some screening from the AONB and to keep Leckhampton Lane as a rural road. The buffer zone only goes a little way to mitigate the impact of development on the view from Leckhampton Hill. Worse still, however, Redrow's application proposes building over the whole the site, leaving no green buffer at all.

The reports in 1993 and 2003 concluded that there was no scope for any significant development on the Leckhampton Fields, and according to Cheltenham's MP, Martin Horwood, the Leckhampton Fields also served as one of the models for developing the Local Green Space legislation. But because the Leckhampton Fields have now been included as a strategic development site in the JCS, some development is likely to happen.

The JCS, as submitted, proposes an indicative figure of 1124 new dwellings on the Leckhampton Fields located roughly as follows:

Borough	Site	Hectares	Dwellings per hectare	Number of dwellings
Cheltenham	East of Kidnappers Lane	21.7	30	650
Cheltenham	East of Farm Lane	4.7	28.7	135
Tewkesbury	West of Farm Lane (SD2)	11.3	30	339
Total		41.7		1124

The 21.7 hectares of land east of Kidnappers Lane is net of 4.0 ha for the proposed primary school and commercial centre. The 4.7 ha east of Farm Lane is net of 1.1 ha for the Hatherley Brook flood plain. The 11.3 hectares west of Farm Lane is net of the 4.1 ha of screening buffer along Leckhampton Lane.

Removing the Leckhampton Fields from the JCS as a strategic development site has become practically impossible. This could mean that at least 450 dwellings would need to be accommodated, which is the minimum number for a strategic development site. Therefore, leaving aside the issues of sustainability, the Neighbourhood Forum has examined on a field by field basis where such development might be accommodated without doing unacceptable damage.

The Neighbourhood Forum contains members from both parish councils and also from Leckhampton Green Land Action Group (LEGLAG). The recommendations it has made,

which are explained in what follows, are based solely on a LGS perspective and disregard other impediments to development including sustainability. The analysis in Annex 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan Concept submitted in 2013 (reference 1) concluded that when the expected increase in traffic over the next 16 years is taken into account there may be no scope for any sustainable development at all on the Leckhampton Fields. The critical impediment here is the traffic through Church Road and the risk that this will gridlock in the morning peak traffic period. The evidence on this was included in the submission by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council on the Bovis-Miller application in 2014 and is equally applicable to the Redrow application.

**The Neighbourhood Forum and the two parish councils wish to stress that not including land in the LGS does not in any way imply agreeing that any major development should be permitted on that land, nor does it imply that in other circumstances the land would not merit inclusion in the LGS, but only that the land concerned does not sufficiently merit protection as part of the LGS when judged against the pressure from the JCS and the need to find some land for housing, It is a matter of identifying the least bad options.**

## 2. Cheltenham part of the Leckhampton fields

The area of the Cheltenham part of the Leckhampton Fields is roughly 62 hectares. About 31.5 hectares is land that was identified for building in the JCS, 24 hectares is land that the JCS excluded from development and the remainder is land that already has dwellings or an allowed planning application. Part of the reason for excluding this land from development relates to sustainability, but a large factor is the proximity to the AONB, the impact on views from the AONB and from Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common, the dense network of footpaths, the high amenity value for walking and dog walking to residents from a wide area north, south, east and west, the historical aspects including the Medieval moat, cottages, church and Leckhampton Manor, and the preservation in the area of rural character and scenic beauty largely untainted by modern developments. These are all factors set out in the reports of 1993 and 2003 and in the LGS application submitted in August 2013 (Reference 1).

All of this land excluded from development by the JCS has a top priority for inclusion in the LGS. It is all land that is very well used by local people through the network of footpaths and as open land. It is highly important in landscape value both locally and as viewed from the AONB and from Leckhampton Hill. Whilst residents heavily criticise the JCS for proposing any development at all on the Leckhampton Field, it must be recognised that the JCS team has correctly identified the most important land to protect, even if in the case of the White Cross Green (SD2) site other pressures have overruled.

On the Cheltenham part of the Leckhampton Fields, the land that the JCS has indicated as being suitable for development comprises three areas:

	Hectares
Northern Fields close to the A46 and north of the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk footpath	15.0
Central fields east of Kidnappers Lane (enclosed within the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk)	10.7
Land east of Farm Lane (including the Hatherley Brook flood plain)	5.8
Total:	31.5

### 2.1 The Northern Fields

The Northern Fields consist mainly of smallholdings and nurseries. The northern tributary of Hatherley Brook flows along the east side of the land and the main tributary flows through the middle. Flooding from these tributaries are significant constraints.

The main considerations from a LGS perspective are as follows:

1. The Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk, which is described with photographs in Appendix 5, runs along the public footpath on the south side of this land. This path is heavily used by local residents and also provides the route by which residents from the Shurdington Road and Warden Hill access the Leckhampton Fields for walking and dog walking. It is very desirable to preserve the attractiveness of this walk as much as possible.
2. The smallholdings have considerable rural charm. Appendix 6 contains 13 photos of the smallholdings and there are seven more photographs in Appendix 5. The livestock on the small holdings both north and south of the Circular Path includes sheep, pigs, hens, geese and ducks and has made this a very attractive walk for bringing children. Unfortunately, although some livestock remains, much of it has been lost in the last year or so because, in expectation of development, the land owners have offered only short term leases and evicted the tenants. However, the area could be restored if longer leases were offered.
3. In the north-west corner of the land there is a pig field that provides a fine view across to Leckhampton Hill. The field itself and the view are loved particularly by people travelling into Cheltenham on the A46. The value of this view at what is the gateway to Cheltenham was raised by councillors in considering the Bovis-Miller application on 31 July 2014.
4. This Northern Fields are furthest from the AONB and development here has the least impact on views from the AONB and from Leckhampton Hill. However, the A46 currently provides a clear boundary to Cheltenham as viewed from the AONB and this will be lost if significant development were permitted. Although the A46 is not conspicuous in the photographic evidence in Appendix 4, it is easily perceived by the human observer noticing traffic moving along the road.
5. At the west end of the land there are largely disused nurseries. These lie at the west end of the land. They are well screened by high hedgerows along Kidnappers Lane and to the east. This location is currently proposed in the developers' illustrative master plan as the site for the new primary school that would be needed if the full development of 1124 dwelling proposed in the JCS were to happen.
6. There are views of Leckhampton Hill not just from the pig field but all along the A46. These views are not as easy for motorist to enjoy because the angle of view to the Hill makes it more difficult to look at the view and keep an eye on the road. Nevertheless building on the land will change the A46 from a half-rural road at boundary edge of Cheltenham into being an urban road.
7. Although the northern fields have become disused and less attractive because of the offering of only short term leases and the eviction of tenants, they could be restored to their former quality if longer leases were granted and tenants were able to return.
8. Many local people greatly enjoy walking through the smallholdings. Residents in Warden Hill say that in the past some of the fields were open and used as amenity land by residents and children, particularly living in Shurdington Road and the east side of Warden Hill. Warden Hill has little amenity land and the smallholdings and Robinswood Field are important to residents. There is a strong case for at least including a reasonably wide ribbon of LGS along Hatherley Brook to provide a scenic route for residents to access the Leckhampton Fields more easily from Woodlands Road and Salisbury Avenue. This is already included in the Developers' Illustrative Masterplan.

The Northern Fields were considered for potential development in Annex 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan Concept submitted in August 2013. Four options were proposed. Option 1 was to include all of the land in the LGS, and this was the option actually put



forward in the LGS application. Option 2 excluded from the LGS the nurseries and fields to the west. Option 3 excluded all of the remaining land apart from the strip of smallholdings along the north side of the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk, and option 4 excluded all of the Northern Fields from the LGS. The difference between options 3 and 4 is small and retaining the smallholdings on both sides of the Circular Walk is very desirable.

Options 3 and 4 recognised that it might be possible to sustain the most important 'city farm park' attractiveness of the smallholdings for children by moving some smallholdings from the Northern Fields onto the land south of the Circular Walk. The southern smallholdings have an area of only 1.6 hectares compared with the 10 acres of the smallholdings on the Northern Fields. But the streams, willows and other vegetation on this land make it attractive. There are also some also good views across these smallholdings to Leckhampton Hill.

The Illustrative Masterplan and outline planning application submitted by Bovis Homes and Miller Homes in September 2013 identified the Northern Fields as the main area for high density development. There is about 9.2 hectares of land available for housing after subtracting 4.0 hectares for the proposed primary school and commercial centre and about 1.8 hectares for balancing ponds and the channel of Hatherley Brook. A LGS corridor along Hatherley Brook would not add to the 4.0 hectares.

An issue when the Bovis-Miller application was rejected by the CBC Planning Committee in July 2014 was why the developers were proposing such a large commercial centre. Good shopping facilities are available in the Bath Road and in Salisbury Avenue and it is better that new residents should help support the commercial viability of these existing centres. All that would be needed locally is a convenience store or small supermarket like the Coop in Leckhampton Road. There is also an argument that this local store should be located in the middle of the overall development so that it is within easier reach of all residents including the White Cross Green (SD2) site, which will otherwise be extremely car dependent. Scaling the commercial centre back might allow the pig field and its cherished view to be preserved, as discussed earlier.

In looking for the least bad options, the Neighbourhood Forum concluded with great regret that despite some of the reasons above for preserving the northern fields as LGS, options 1 and 2 in Annex 2 of the NP Concept are no longer viable given that the JCS has now been submitted. It therefore recommends adopting option 3. It also recommends scaling back the commercial centre or removing it entirely.

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council (LWWH PC) has been made well aware by some residents in Warden Hill that they believe strongly that the Northern Fields should be retained in the LGS. The Parish Council is undertaking a public consultation of residents in Warden Hill and in Leckhampton to allow people to express their views and concerns. The consultation questionnaire is at appendix 3.

## **2.2 The Central Fields**

The Central Fields are bounded by the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk and Lotts Meadow. They can be divided into three areas:

1. Central nurseries/orchards These nurseries and orchards lie between Kidnappers Lane and Lotts Meadow. They have a combined area of about 3.5 hectares, net of an existing house and garden at the east corner.
2. Robinswood Fields North of the central nurseries/orchards is a field of about 2.4 ha net of a house and garden named Robinswood in the centre. To the north of Robinswood Field, there are smallholdings with a combined area of about 0.3 ha.

3. Fields north of Lotts Meadow To the east of Robinswood Field, there is a pair of fields with a combined area of about 2.7 hectares and to the north of these there are two smallholdings with a combined area of about 1.2 hectares.

### Central nurseries/orchards

There is no public access to the central nurseries/orchards area and it is also reasonably well screened by high hedges and trees on the western boundary along Kidnappers Lane and on the south and east boundary with Lotts Meadow. The main nursery has been derelict for some years and the smaller nursery at the south end of this area was closed in 2014 in expectation of development. The orchards are old and quite attractive and worthy of preservation. There are also tall trees within this site that provide additional screening particularly when this area is viewed from Leckhampton Hill.

The Neighbourhood Forum has looked hard at whether development could occur on this site without spoiling the local area or the view from Leckhampton Hill. This is very difficult judgement to make. The site is at the south end of the central fields and development could have a large impact on the views from the AONB and particularly from Leckhampton Hill. This is discussed in Appendix 4. It would be essential to ensure that the hedgerows were fully preserved on the west, south and east side so that any development is well screened. The developers' illustrative masterplan does preserve these hedgerows, but to be safer they need to be included in the LGS.

Although the hedgerows may be able to screen the site sufficiently from view locally, they will not screen it from view from Leckhampton Hill. However, as discussed in Appendix 4, the line of poplars along Kidnappers Lane (which all have tree preservation order) does provide considerable screening. Provided that any development were in keeping with a semi-rural location it could be visually acceptable. The existing development at Leckhampton Farm Court on Farm Lane, although much smaller, is an example of how this can be achieved. The Bovis-Miller application already proposes lower density development in the nurseries/orchards area and it should be feasible to achieve an appropriate semi-rural character.

One important consideration is to maintain sufficient visual separation between any development on the nursery/orchards site and any development on the land west of Robinswood Field. The separation is maintained by a strip of Robinswood Field. The photographic evidence in Appendix 4 shows that this may be sufficient, but it would depend on how close any development on the Nurseries/Orchard site came to the northern boundary of the site and also on roof heights.

The Neighbourhood Forum originally considered leaving the central nurseries/orchard area within the LGS whilst noting that there was potential for suitably sympathetic development on this site. However, the advice from Elin Tattersall of GRCC on behalf of CBC has been to remove this area from the LGS, subject to the above caveats about the need for any development to be very sympathetic to the location and to protect all the screening including the internal trees. The Forum has accepted this recommendation.

### Robinswood Field

This field is well used by local people for walking and dog walking, especially for residents in Shurdington Road and Warden Hill. The Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk runs along the west side of this field and there are also several paths round the north, east and south side, so that people can make a circuit of the field. The field gives good views, particularly towards Leckhampton Hill and of the smallholdings with their willows and other vegetation. This is

land of good scenic quality and public utility and needs to be included in the Local Green Space. Appendix 7 has the photographic evidence.

### Fields north of Lotts Meadow

The case for including the fields north of Lotts Meadow in the LGS is less clear cut. The public does not have access to these fields. However, there is no doubt of their importance to the view from the AONB, particularly from Leckhampton Hill, and from the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk which runs round the east and north side of the fields.

It is worth explaining here the importance to the view from Leckhampton Hill. This is an iconic view, one of the main highlights of the Cotswold Way National Trail, a viewpoint featured in guide books and one that people visiting Gloucestershire particularly come to see. There are two famous viewpoints: one from the observation table, which is the viewpoint marked on the OS map, and the second about 100 metres to the south with the Devil's Chimney landmark in the foreground. There are three main views from the observation table: the view west across the green belt gap towards Wales, the view north-west across Cheltenham to the Malvern Hills and Shropshire Hills, and the view north along the Cotswold Scarp. It is the view west that is particularly affected by development on the White Cross Green (SD2) site and the view northwest that is particularly affected by any development on the Cheltenham part of the Leckhampton Fields.

The Neighbourhood Forum did a photographic study of all the main views from the various viewpoints on Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common and some of the findings and photographic evidence are shown in Appendix 4. For most of these viewpoints and in particular the observation table and Devil's Chimney, the view across Lotts Meadow and over the two fields north of Lotts Meadow is very important in creating the sense of distance and avoiding the Cheltenham urban area encroaching too close.

The Neighbourhood Forum has looked at whether some development could occur on these fields by exploiting the screening provided by the high hedgerow and trees at the north end of Lotts Meadow. The trees provide only partial cover even in summer. The land is sloping away north at an angle of about 1 in 35, but the angle of view from the top of Leckhampton Hill is about 1 in 8. So although the hedgerow would soften any development, it would not provide enough screening.

The Neighbourhood Forum therefore recommends that the fields north of Lotts Meadow should remain in the LGS. However it is worth noting that it would be possible to locate a balancing pond on these fields serving development on the central nurseries/orchard area, and this could allow a reduction of about 0.25 ha in the size of the balancing ponds on the Northern Fields, making space for up to 10 more dwellings there. Not developing on Robinswood Field and the fields north of Lotts Meadow might also mean that balancing pond capacity was not needed for these fields. This might reduce the amount of balancing pond required on the Northern Fields by about 0.5 ha.

### **2.3 Fields east of Farm Lane**

The Ordnance Survey map shows three fields east of Farm Lane, but in fact the two southern fields are merged. The combined area of the fields is 4.7 hectares net of 1.1 hectares in the Hatherley Brook flood plane that is proposed in the Illustrative Masterplan to be used for balancing ponds. The field at the north end of Farm Lane is used for crops and is not accessed by the public. The southern fields are used for grazing horses. There is a public footpath across to this land which is part of the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk. Photographs of the fields are included in Appendix 5.

There are two main factors that argue in favour of including these fields within the LGS. The first is the effect that development would have on the rural aspect. Currently, when travelling along Farm Lane, there are houses on the west side but hedgerows and fields on the east side. The feeling is predominantly one of countryside. If the fields east of Farm Lane are developed, it would alter the nature of the area making it much more urban. The Illustrative Masterplan is careful to retain hedgerows and to protect the very attractive rural character of Kidnappers Lane. The hedgerows will also partly screen any development east of Farm Lane. Nevertheless, the degree of development proposed along Farm Lane would largely convert it into an urban road.

The second factor is the effect on the view from Leckhampton Hill and the AONB. Currently the Lanes Estate and the older housing on the west side of Farm Lane has the appearance of a peninsula of housing jutting out from Cheltenham rather than being part of the Cheltenham conurbation. This is very important in maintaining a predominantly rural view across the Severn Vale. At present, as shown by the photographic evidence in Appendix 4, when looking from the main viewpoints the eye goes easily across the Lanes Estate to the green belt land of Brizen Farm and beyond, maintaining an overall impression of countryside. To preserve this it is very important not to broaden the peninsula. This becomes even more important if development were to happen on the White Cross Green (SD2) site. Building on the land east of Farm Lane would turn the peninsula into a much larger mass connected to any development permitted on the Northern Fields. Given the likelihood that some development will happen both on the Northern Fields and on the White Cross Green (SD2), there is a strong argument for keeping the land east of Farm Lane undeveloped.

The Forum looked at the possibility of building just on the north field. But this field is quite conspicuous from the main viewpoints on Leckhampton Hill, as again shown in the photographic evidence in Appendix 4. As with developing on White Cross Green (SD2 site), developing on the central nurseries/orchards site would also make it more important not to develop on the fields east of Farm Lane. It is the same argument of trying to maintain depth of view and to avoid creating a solid conurbation. As noted by the Inspector in 1993 and by the 2003 study, the special character and beauty of the Leckhampton Fields is fragile. Developing on the fields east of Farm Lane would be a step too far.

## **2.4 Land west of Farm Lane – White Cross Green (SD2) site**

The White Cross Green (SD2) site was not part of the land considered by the Inspector in 1993 or in the 2003 study. As already mentioned, however, the whole of the site was judged in the JCS Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design Report 2012 to be of highest landscape sensitivity and the report recommended there should be no development on the land, or at most only development on the north-east field - one of the four fields on the site. The JCS study on changes to the green belt rated the White Cross Green (SD2) site as the top priority for inclusion in the green belt. When viewed from the main viewpoints on Leckhampton Hill, the White Cross Green (SD2) site sticks far out across the line of the green belt south of Cheltenham, as shown in the photographs in Appendix 4.

The impact of the White Cross Green (SD2) site on the AONB and on the views from Leckhampton Hill is one of the key issues. To mitigate this impact, the Developers' Consortium Illustrative Masterplan includes a green buffer zone between Leckhampton Lane and the development. This buffer zone has an area of 4.1 hectares. It is about 90 metres deep at its eastern end and 160 metres deep at its western end. This widening is designed to reduce the impact of any development on the view from Leckhampton Hill across the green belt south of Cheltenham. The southwest part of the site protrudes particularly far over the line of the green belt. So reducing the extent of the development on the west side does help to reduce the impact on this view. The Illustrative Masterplan also proposes planting a community orchard in the buffer zone to provide screening and soften the edge of



development. These are all mitigating features that were required in the application that was rejected in 2009 and which have been carried forward in the Tewkesbury plan and in the JCS as well as in the Illustrative Masterplan.

A second important purpose of the buffer zone and screening is to preserve Leckhampton Lane as a country road. This is a very attractive lane along the edge of the AONB and a very large number of people drive along it each day and benefit from its scenic quality.

Redrow in its recent application has somewhat brazenly proposed to disregard the buffer zone and to build right up to Leckhampton Lane. This emphasises how important it is to protect the buffer zone as a local green space. The Developers' Consortium Illustrative Masterplan shows walks through the buffer zone connected to parts of the proposed development and an informal kick-about area as well as the community orchard. So the buffer zone would also have the appropriate public utility for inclusion in the LGS.

The White Cross Green (SD2) site currently consists of open lightly grazed pasture. It affords fine views both of the Cotswold scarp and of the neighbouring countryside. It also includes a number of ancient hedgerows and the field structure dates from before the Enclosure Act. In the Developers' Consortium Illustrative Masterplan the hedgerows are preserved as four small green spaces that are linked by roads and footpaths. This is a good approach and the Neighbourhood Forum has partially adopted it in the LGS by proposing a LGS strip along the north-south section of hedgerow connecting the buffer zone in the south with a proposed LGS amenity space in the north. Footpaths running either side of the hedgerow would also provide a route by which people in the Lanes Estate or walking on the Cheltenham Circular Path could easily access the buffer zone and its orchards.

Preserving the ancient hedgerows is important both for the wildlife and history. The Redrow application proposes removing all of these ancient hedgerows, again disregarding the Illustrative Masterplan. The hedgerows have recently been cut back heavily, maybe with the aim of reducing their ecological value. This demonstrates how vital it is to protect these important features though LGS designation.

The Cheltenham Circular Footpath runs across the site and provides public access to the north part of the site. All four fields are open and the public can roam over the whole area of the site. The north part of the site is well used by residents in the Lanes Estate as amenity land. The Lanes Estate was built in the 1970s at a time when there was less consideration about amenity space. The estate is quite high density with about 22 dwelling per hectare - mostly four bedroom family homes. However, there is little amenity space within the Estate itself apart from the surrounds of the Lanes balancing pond and a small area at the south end of the Estate. For this reason, the White Cross Green (SD2) land along the Cheltenham Circular Footpath adjacent to the Estate has always been used as local amenity space by residents. Local people are justifiably concerned that development on the White Cross Green (SD2) site would remove this space. A village green application was submitted to protect the land and was scored maximum marks in all four categories. It was withdrawn due to a point of law brought up by the QC.

The question is how much LGS is appropriate as amenity space and where it should be located. As discussed already, there is an informal kick-about area included in the buffer zone and this could be accessible via the hedgerow footpaths. But this kick-about area would be about 500 metres away depending on what routes were provided through any development, and would be too remote for children in the Lanes Estate to use without accompanying parents. The Neighbourhood Forum is therefore proposing that there should be a modest area of local green space between the Lanes Estate and any development on the White Cross Green (SD2) site. As well as providing amenity space, this would also:

- A. Provide a route for the Cheltenham Circular Path that avoids the footpath having to be routed through the Estate;
- B. Provide a kick-about area on the east side between the Cheltenham Circular Path and the Lanes Estate with an area of about 1 ha;
- C. Significantly narrow the width of the development as viewed from Leckhampton Hill and create the visual impression of separation between the two developments, again helping to avoid the appearance of a large housing mass;
- D. Provide a strip of separation land of about 0.5 ha between Brizen Lane and the new development.

It is worth emphasising bullet C. The proposed 1 ha of LGS at the north east corner of the site not only narrows the width of the site when viewed from Leckhampton Hill but, as mentioned earlier, allows the eye to skip over a narrow part of the Lanes Estate to the Brizen Farm land beyond and from there along the green belt. This can be seen from the photographic evidence in Appendix 4.

The proposed area of the amenity space in the LGS is 1.5 hectares which accords with the government amenity space guideline of 2.43 hectares per 1000 residents. It is worth noting that the original Village Green Application sought around 5 hectares of protected land, much larger than the LGS area being proposed now.

The LGS area actually shown on the submitted map is larger than 1.5 hectares. This is because some of this area would be taken up by the balancing pond for any development and some space on the east side would be taken up by the road exit onto Farm Lane. The green space shown also includes the existing orchard/hedgerow between Farm Lane and the site.

## 2.5 Conclusion

As noted earlier, there are arguments to justify including all of the land in the LGS, as was done when the application was submitted in August 2013. It is an issue of identifying the least bad options. Noting this and the caveat at the end of section 1, the parish councils propose the LGS boundary shown in the accompanying map. This adopts Option 3 for the Northern Fields excluding them entirely from the LGS apart from the strip of smallholdings along the footpath. The Forum recommends that there should be consultation with Bovis-Miller and with tenants of the smallholdings to determine whether it would be possible to move some small holdings onto the land to the south of the path and what would be the best way to restore and preserve the 'city farm park' benefit of this area which local people have found such a delight in the past, whilst also meeting the needs for development.

It is important to reinforce the caveats about retaining existing trees and screening. These do a great deal to soften the impact of any development, whether viewed locally or from Leckhampton Hill. The three developers, Bovis Homes, Miller Homes and Davis Homes, who produced the Illustrative Masterplan and strategic concept for the area were careful about protecting important hedgerows. But Redrow has demonstrated that developers cannot always be relied on to show such sensitivity. This is the reason that these hedgerows need to be retained in the LGS.

The Parish Council decided after discussion with GRCC that it should undertake a full public consultation with the local community on the proposals. The consultation leaflet and questionnaire is at appendix 3. The closing date for the consultation is 23 January 2015 and the Council hopes to be able to submit the analysed findings from the consultation together with the responses by the middle of the following week. The Council did not undertake public consultation when it submitted the Neighbourhood Planning Concept and Local Green Space application in 2013 and it is timely to do this now.

**PETITIONS SUBMITTED IN THE PAST 4 YEARS FOR PROTECTING THE LECKHAMPTON FIELDS FROM DEVELOPMENT**

1. Petition submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council in July 2011 with over 2000 signatures. The wording of the petition reads:

To Cheltenham Borough and Tewkesbury Borough Councils:

We the undersigned\* urge the above Councils to allocate\*\* a designated area to the South of Cheltenham (including the land formally known as Leckhampton White Land, Brizen Farm and Land West of Farm Lane) that shall be protected from inappropriate large scale development. This land is of high community interest due to its attractiveness, views in and out of the AONB and the contribution it makes to the setting of Cheltenham. We also highly value easy accessibility for informal recreation, local food production, wildlife, environmental and ecological interest. We suggest that although parts of the area are in Shurdington, the designated land may for convenience (at the Councils' discretion) become known as: LECKHAMPTON COUNTRY PARK.

\*All signatories declare that they have not signed another copy of the petition.

\*\*In their Joint Core Strategy, Local Development Framework or another appropriate planning policy or document

2. Petition submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council on 16 December 2013 with over 1000 signatures. The wording of the petition reads:

**SAVE THE LECKHAMPTON FIELDS**

We, the undersigned, call on Cheltenham Borough Council to remove the Leckhampton fields from further consideration within the Joint Core Strategy. The Council must do everything in its power to protect the beautiful and valuable open countryside south of Leckhampton from inappropriate and unsustainable development. If the developers go ahead and build 1,075 new houses on the Leckhampton fields it would cause traffic chaos, exacerbate the serious flooding that has occurred in the area, overwhelm local school and medical health provision, destroy much loved fields and hedgerows and blight Cheltenham with urban sprawl and overcrowding. The Council must insist that brown-field sites are built on first before even considering the destruction of the Leckhampton fields.

The petition received over 1000 signature, the number required to require a Borough Council debate. No further signatures were collected once the 1000 figure had been reached. The petition would certainly have gained even greater support if it had been circulated widely.

## Letters of Support from local Councillors and organisations

To Leckhampton Neighbourhood Forum – Attn Margaret White (Forum Secretary)  
From County Councillor for Leckhampton and Warden Hill, Iain Dobie

Dear Margaret,

I wish to support the application for Local Green Space status for key areas of Leckhampton Fields.

This is an area I have known well since my childhood. I was born and raised on the (then new) Warden Hill estate, just 100 metres North of The Fields' Shurdington Road boundary.

As a child I escaped from the large housing development where I lived to play in Leckhampton Fields' orchards and meadows, and caught crayfish with friends in its clear stream. I walked its pathways up to Leckhampton Hill to collect fossils and explore the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty below which Leckhampton Fields nestle.

I wish future generations of urban children and families to enjoy the same pleasures in this special green space, which surely grows in natural value as Cheltenham's housing stock continues its expansion to the South and West.

As Martin Horwood MP has previously said, Leckhampton Fields are exactly the kind of area which the Local Green Space legislation was designed to protect.

Regards,

Iain Dobie  
County Councillor for Leckhampton and Warden Hill

Name, address and email supplied

30 January 2015

The Secretary,  
Neighbourhood Forum Group

Dear Sir,

### LOCAL GREEN SPACE AT LECKHAMPTON

I should like to add my support to Leckhampton with Warden Hill and Shurdington Parish Councils in their campaign to protect the green fields at Leckhampton and ensure that they remain available for local inhabitants and visitors to enjoy.

I write as a longstanding resident of Leckhampton who chose to live here on the outskirts of Cheltenham, where I and my family could benefit from the peaceful rural environment. During my long involvement with the Leckhampton Local History Society I have come to realise the historic importance of the village, which is more than just a suburb of Cheltenham. Although I am writing in a personal capacity, I feel that many of the Society's members would agree with my sentiments.



Leckhampton was mentioned in the Domesday Book. Its church and the manor house (one of the oldest domestic buildings in Gloucestershire), built of local stone, date back to the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century but remain integral to community life. Though just outside the area in question, they enhance immeasurably the view from the fields towards the Cotswold escarpment. Building houses over these level open spaces would totally destroy this unique and precious prospect, which is admired not only by local inhabitants but by many visitors, including some who come from overseas to see where their ancestors had lived.

The fields to the north of the Moat are the site of medieval settlement, traces of which would be obliterated if houses were built over them, and the prospect of any future archaeological survey would be gone.

While space for new housing clearly has to be found, and to a casual observer the lands in Leckhampton might seem suitable, I firmly believe that they are too historically valuable to be treated in that way and that later generations would not forgive us for allowing such an irrevocable step to be taken.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Miller  
Chair Leckhampton Local History Society

From: Burns, Andrew (NE)  
Date: Tuesday, 10 February 2015  
Subject: Local Greenspace for Cheltenham  
To: Elizabeth Pimley

Mrs Pimley,

Further to your recent email Natural England does support your application for a Greenspace, near Leckhampton to protect the Cotswold AONB, and provides a space for wildlife, and a component of green infrastructure.

Local Green Space is found in the government's National Planning and Policy Framework in paragraph 76 and 77, and of course it is cited in footnote 9 in the same framework, the one that also states that development should be restricted in the AONB and this gives Local Green Space supports in decision taking.

I hope this reply is timely for your purposes in designating this Local Greenspace.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Burns

***Jonathon Porritt***  
***Address, telephone number and email supplied***

9<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Margaret

Thank you so much for sending me all the relevant materials regarding the Local Green Space application by Leckhampton and Warden Hill and Shurdington Parish Councils to Cheltenham Borough Council.

I've reviewed all of these documents with great interest, and with a gathering sense that this just has to be the right time for this crucially important area to be afforded the special status it deserves as a Local Green Space.

I wish you and all your colleagues in the Leckhampton Neighbourhood Forum all the very best in this timely and highly significant intervention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathon Porritt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

**Jonathon Porritt**

### **In support of The local Green Space – Leckhampton Fields**

In this South West area of Cheltenham we are fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful parts of this Country. It is therefore vitally important that this is recognised by all statutory bodies and elected members and for them to realise the value local people place on this part of our countryside.

The views, wild life, and recreational space for our future generation are so valued at this time from the pressure of developers wanting to build.

In my ward of Warden Hill we suffered greatly from severe flooding in 2007 with many homes having to be vacated, for some, up to 2 years before they could return.

It is so vital that our green fields in the Leckhampton area are protected from being built on for the protection of those living further down from the water flow.

I therefore appeal to those decision makers that our heritage of beautiful green land is protected within the Local Green Plan

Sincerely  
Councillor Anne Regan  
Warden Hill Ward.

5 February 2015

Dear Mr Stephenson

CPRE supports in principle the application made by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council for part of the open land between A46 Shurdington Road and Church Road/Leckhampton Lane (known as Leckhampton Fields) to be designated an area of Local Green Space.

Much of the area proposed is currently and has historically been used for informal recreational purposes, including horse-riding, dog walking, running, walking, children's play and other such activities that contribute to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of those living on this side of Cheltenham. We are particularly concerned to protect the unspoilt and highly valued area to the SE which abuts, and thus affects the setting of the Cotswolds AONB.

Providing Local Green Space protection, and its inclusion in the forthcoming Cheltenham Local Plan, will be particularly important should the Joint Core Strategy be approved in its present form. It would clearly contribute to any shortfall in the requirement to provide informal open space within the Cheltenham urban area.

Yours sincerely

Major Tom Hancock DL

### APPENDIX 3- Public consultation January 2015

Results (please see wording of introduction and form below)

Total number of completed forms = 762 (12 more have been added, total 774)

Summary for questions 1 to 4 (with no weightings)					Combine d	Important (one tick)	Particularl y important (two ticks)
	Number responding		1466				
	Number of responses counted		1421				
1	How often do you use the fields / paths?	Daily or twice daily	85		6%		
		Almost daily	351		25%		
		Few times per week	244		17%		
		Many times per month	287		20%		
		Few times per month	236. 5		17%		
		Occasionally	172		12%		
2	How do you use the fields?	Walking	954	27 1	86%	67%	19%
		Dog walking	351	14 1	35%	25%	10%

		Running / jogging	278	40	22%	20%	3%
		Playing games	182	7	13%	13%	0%
		With children	504	11 5	44%	35%	8%
		Relaxing	585	85	47%	41%	6%
		Other	271		19%		
3	What areas / paths do you particularly use?	Lotts Meadow	774	22 5	70%	54%	16%
		KL/FL/CR triangle	959	23 1	84%	67%	16%
		White Cross Green	457	13 2	41%	32%	9%
		Moorend Stream Path	709	13 3	59%	50%	9%
		Path in smallholdings	661	23 7	63%	47%	17%
		Robinswood	491	70	39%	35%	5%
		Circular walks	669	71	52%	47%	5%
4	What do you most value?	Opportunity for exercise	774	42 1	84%	54%	30%
		Views of Leckhampton Hill	814	45 1	89%	57%	32%
		Views across the fields	815	37 7	84%	57%	27%
		Wildflowers	740	14 7	62%	52%	10%
		Trees	866	19 7	75%	61%	14%
		Orchards	520	51	40%	37%	4%
		Hedgerows	804	18 0	69%	57%	13%
		Rural atmosphere	885	34 9	87%	62%	25%
		Variety	523	57	41%	37%	4%
		Tranquillity	803	28 3	76%	57%	20%
		Farm animals	705	13 9	59%	50%	10%
		Horses	453	61	36%	32%	4%
		Birds	789	19 3	69%	56%	14%
		Wild animals	652	16 8	58%	46%	12%
		Old nurseries	309	24	23%	22%	2%
		Smallholdings	435	66	35%	31%	5%
		Network of footpaths	811	29 3	78%	57%	21%
		Circular walks	587	15 3	52%	41%	11%
		Medieval moat	431	62	35%	30%	4%
		Ponds	459	58	36%	32%	4%
		Streams	655	13 4	56%	46%	9%
		Medieval cottages	465	92	39%	33%	6%
		Wilderness areas	574	14 3	50%	40%	10%



## Wording of introduction and form (not formatted)

LECKHAMPTON WITH WARDEN HILL PARISH COUNCIL

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROTECTION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE IN SOUTH CHELTENHAM**

Cheltenham Borough Council is developing the new Cheltenham Plan and asking for submissions for areas to be protected permanently from development under the new Local Green Space (LGS) legislation. The Parish Council has identified four areas in the parish: (1) the **Leckhampton Fields** (shown on the map overleaf), (2) Weavers Field (in Warden Hill), (3) the fields around Leckhampton Court and St. Peters Church, and (4) the fields below the west end of Daisybank Road. We have been advised that because (3) and (4) are in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), we do not need to submit a LGS application for them at this stage, and the protection for Weavers Field is already very strong, particularly because of its royal QEII status.

For the Leckhampton Fields, we have already submitted a LGS application jointly with Shurdington Parish Council in August 2013. In this we proposed that all of the Leckhampton Fields should be in the LGS. We are now updating this because the decision by the borough councils to include the Leckhampton Fields as a strategic development site in the Joint Core Strategy has forced us to cut back on the size of the LGS. As part of this update we need to consult local residents on what we are now proposing. This consultation is very **URGENT** because its output has to be delivered to Cheltenham Borough Council by **26 January**. **If you value the Leckhampton Fields and the views from Leckhampton Hill, please respond now.**

### **HOW TO RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO US**

Please either post your questionnaire to Clerk, LWWH PC, 7 Aldershaw Close, Up Hatherley, GL51 3TP in time **to arrive by 23 January** or drop it off by 23 January to one of the following addresses from which the Parish Council will collect it.

**Leckhampton:** The Moat, Church Rd (opposite St Peter's); 21 Collum End Rise; 165 Leckhampton Rd; 8 Eynon Close; 56 Naunton Lane; 153 Old Bath Rd; 347 Old Bath Rd; 5 Merlin Close; 11 Arden Rd; 3 Brizen Lane. **Warden Hill:** 38A Canterbury Walk; 1 Friars Close; 115 Salisbury Ave.

Or scan into pdf the questionnaire page plus the back page if used and extra pages if inserted and send as an email attachment to **[lwwhpc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lwwhpc@yahoo.co.uk)** - please include your name and address in the email.

### **WHAT WE ARE NOW PROPOSING**

You can view the Parish Council's submission by going to: [www.lwwhpc.org.uk](http://www.lwwhpc.org.uk). The boundary we are now proposing for the LGS is shown on the map overleaf. The cross-hatched area is the revised LGS. We are proposing to exclude the Nurseries/Orchards between Kidnappers Lane and Lotts Meadow because they are not accessible to the public and are well screened. Sympathetic development here might be acceptable from a landscape perspective. We are also proposing to exclude most of the Northern Fields even though there are many good reasons to keep them in the LGS, as we have explained in the

submission. But we have left a corridor along Hatherley Brook to give footpath access from Warden Hill.

On the land west of Farm Lane we are proposing a green buffer zone along Leckhampton Lane to help soften any development when viewed from Leckhampton Hill and the AONB and to keep Leckhampton Lane as a rural road. We are also proposing a buffer zone on the north side to provide amenity space for residents in the Lanes Estate and a route for the Cheltenham Circular Path. Thirdly we are proposing a green corridor along the ancient hedgerows; this also provides a path between the two buffer zones.

Please give us your views on any of these proposals, either in support or disagreement, using the space on the back page or by inserting an A4 sheet inside the form. If you think there is any area that we are currently including in the proposed LGS but which could be left out, please explain which area and why.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**How local people use and value the Leckhampton Fields are key factors in the LGS application.**

1. How often over the year do you use the Leckhampton Fields and footpaths? (Please tick as applicable)

Almost daily ☐ Few times a week ☐ Many times a month ☐ Few times a month ☐  
Occasionally ☐

2. How do you use the fields (please tick all that apply; **double tick if particularly important to you**)

Walking ☐ Dog walking ☐ Running/jogging ☐ Playing games ☐ With children ☐  
Relaxing ☐ Other ☐ (please explain)

.....

3. Which areas/footpaths do you particularly use? (Please see map and tick / double tick all that apply)

Lotts Meadow ☐ Fields and footpaths between Kidnappers Lane, Farm Lane and Church Road ☐

White Cross Fields west of Farm Lane ☐ Footpath along Moorend Stream from A46 to Lotts Meadow ☐ Footpaths through the smallholdings ☐ Footpath and field by Robinswood ☐  
The circular walks ☐

4. What do you most value? (Please tick all that apply; **double tick any particularly important to you**)

Opportunity for exercise ☐ Views of Leckhampton Hill ☐ Views across the fields ☐  
Wildflowers ☐ Trees ☐ Orchards ☐ Hedgerows ☐ Rural atmosphere ☐ Variety ☐  
Tranquillity ☐ Farm animals ☐ Horses ☐ Birds ☐ Wild animals ☐ Old nurseries ☐  
Smallholdings ☐ Network of footpaths ☐ Circular walks ☐ Medieval moat ☐ Ponds ☐  
Streams ☐ Medieval cottages ☐ Wilderness areas ☐

Other ☐ (please explain)

.....

5. How important are the Leckhampton Field to you and why? (Please add personal comments)

**The effect of any development on the views from Leckhampton Hill is another key factor**

6. How important to you and to Cheltenham are the views from Leckhampton Hill across the Leckhampton Fields – the view towards the Malverns and Shropshire Hills and the view across the green belt to Wales?
7. How much do you think it would damage the views if development came closer to the Hill?

### Photographic Study of How Development on the Leckhampton Fields would affect the views from Leckhampton Hill



Photo 1 shows the view from above the main quarries north of the Observation Table. The importance of Lotts Meadow and of the field north of Lotts Meadow (bright green colour) is clear and also Robinswood Field to the left of it (hay colour). The photo shows that the hedgerow and trees at the north end of Lotts Meadow would not provide much screening for any possible development on field north of Lotts Meadow. The fields east of Farm Lane are also evident, especially the arable field at the corner of Farm Lane and Kidnappers Lane (emerald green). In front of Robinswood Field and left of Lotts Meadow is the solid mass of the tall poplars in Kidnappers Lane (all of these are covered by tree preservation orders). These help to screen the central part of nursery/orchard site in Kidnappers Lane. The buildings on the east side of this site, adjacent to Lotts Meadow, can be seen and are not significantly hidden by the hedgerow along Lotts Meadow. The west side of the nursery/orchards site is also clear but development would be softened by the hedgerow and trees in front of this. The field west of Robinswood Field is also evident, but this has not been included in the current proposed Local Green Space. It perhaps should be included or at least the south-east corner of this field to create greater visual separation from any development on the nurseries/orchard site.





Photo 2 is a wide-angle view from the same viewpoint shows the view from the same viewpoint as photo 1, but looking a little more west.



Photo 3 above is looking north-west. It shows how the west end of Brizen Lane is in line with the edge of the green belt along south-west Cheltenham and how development on the fields west of Farm Lane (White Cross Green fields) would extend right across the line of the green belt, almost to the left edge of the photograph. Behind Brizen Lane and the Lanes Estate the green fields of Brizen Farm are clear. The view shows how at present, with the fields of Brizen Farm behind, the Lanes Estate looks like a promontory rather than part of the conurbation of Cheltenham. The eye easily skips over this housing to the Brizen Farm fields beyond. This demonstrates why it is important that the Brizen Farm land is green belt but also that it is illogical not to have also included the White Cross Green land in the green belt also, as was proposed. All the White Cross Green site was considered in the JCS 2012 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design report to be of the highest landscape sensitivity and importance. The report recommended not building on any of this land and at most only building on the north-east of the four fields. Development just on this north-east field would lie in front of Brizen Lane as seen from Leckhampton Hill and would not cause any large extension across the green belt.



Photo 4 above is a close up showing better how Lotts Meadow, the field north of Lotts Meadow, Robinswood Field and the nurseries/orchards site would affect the view from the Hill. It shows the existing bank of trees on the nurseries/orchard site. These would help to considerably to soften and hide any development, provided they are retained. The view also shows how the large L-shaped bank of poplars in Kidnappers Lane hides the central part of the nurseries/orchards site, as noted earlier. The field west of Robinswood Field is quite apparent in this photo and is not well hidden. It is important that any development on this site will be visually separated from any development on the nurseries/orchard site. The strip of Robinswood Field between the two sites appears to be wide enough to achieve this, but any development on the Nurseries/Orchards needs to be sufficiently far from the Robinswood Field boundary and/or have sufficiently low roof height not to hide this separation.





Photo 5 above shows the view north. This view is not affected by the Leckhampton Fields apart from the fields above Collum End Rise, which are in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. But the view shows the effect of development coming much closer to the Hill, changing the view from one that is across countryside to one that is primarily across the Cheltenham conurbation.



Photo 6 above is the view northwest towards the Malverns from the Observation Table on Leckhampton Hill. In clearer conditions, the Shropshire Hill would also be visible to in the top right. One can see the presence of the fields east of Farm Lane in the centre left and how developing on these fields as well as developing on th northern fields beyond bring the Cheltenham conurbation much closer to the Hill. Again the nurseries/orchard site is reasonably well hidden. The importance of Lotts Meadow and Robinswood Field is also clear.





Photo 7 is the view from the Observation Table looking north-northwest. It shows the importance of Lotts Meadow, Burrows Field, the field north of Lotts Meadow and Robinswood Field.



Photo 8 is looking west-north-west from the Observation Table towards Wales. As before this view demonstrates how much development on the White Cross Green land west of Farm Lane would affect the view by protruding out across the green belt. The benefit is clear of not developing in the two southern fields and particularly in the south-west field. The view also shows the benefit of keeping the north-east corner of the site green as this creates a sort of green corridor on the right hand side of the picture from the AONB fields across the thin strip of Brizen Lane to the fields of Brizen Farm beyond and then along the edge of the green belt.



View 9 is a wide-angle view north-west from the Devils Chimney observation platform, with the Malvern Hills in the distance. The fields west of Farm Lane protrude somewhat less across the green belt because of the different angle of view. The Devils Chimney is about 100 metres south of the Observation Table.





Photo 10 is a wide-angle view north-north-west from the Devil's Chimney Observation Table. It shows the importance of the fields between Farm Lane and Kidnappers Lane and of Lotts Meadow.



Photo 11 is looking north-north-west from the Devils Chimney Observation Platform. The top of the Devils Chimney is just visible in the bottom left corner. Because this view is not wide-angle, the effect of the field north of Lotts Meadow and of Robinswood Field are more obvious. From this angle the eastern part of the nurseries/orchard site is hidden by the poplars in Kidnappers Lane, but the western side of this site is less hidden. The visual separation between the nurseries/orchard site and on the field west of Robinswood Field is more obvious from this viewing point than from the Observation Table because more of the west side of Robinswood Field is visible.





Photo 12 is a wide-angle view from the south end of Leckhampton Hill. Because of the trees in the foreground, the effect of developing on the land west of Farm Lane would be to bring the housing right up to the tree line with very little visual separation between the trees on the Hill and the housing on the land west of Farm Lane.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Footpaths and walks in the Leckhampton Fields**

Because of its network of footpaths, the Leckhampton Fields have many different walks. The rich diversity of landscape, hedgerows, trees, streams, ponds, many fields, small holdings, cottages, creates a excellent variety of interest and beauty that changes through the year.

#### **Circular walks**

The Leckhampton Field Circular Walk has several routes, depending on the choice one makes in the network of footpaths between Kidnappers Lane and Farm Lane. All of the routes do however pass through the small holdings and Robinswood Field and it is easiest to describe them by starting from the smallholdings. The walks are described below in an anti-clockwise direction, but can obviously be walked in either direction and the photographs illustrating the walks are similarly in an anticlockwise sequence.

Walking in the anticlockwise direction, there are fine views of the Hill across Robinswood Field, along Kidnappers Lane and from the fields of Church Farm. Walking in the clockwise direction there are fine views of Leckhampton Hill in Lotts Meadow and Burrows Field, fields between Kidnappers west of Kidnappers Lane.

As well as the public footpaths, there are additional paths all over Lotts Meadow, round the perimeter of Robinswood Field and round the field by the old Leckhampton Cottages (the field south of the three fields marked Horses/Grazing near the middle of the map). The Cheltenham Circular Path crosses these fields and is shown on the map by the Ordnance Survey diamond markings.

In the anticlockwise direction and starting from the small holdings, the circular walk follows round the west end of the smallholdings to Robinswood Field and from there to Kidnappers Lane. There is wide grass verge on the west side of Kidnappers Lane and the route follows this to the corner where Kidnappers Lane east. From here, there are two public footpaths, one heading west and the other south.

The long circuit takes the path west, crossing Hatherley Brook to reach Farm Lane. Here the route turns left and follows Farm Lane south past a much appreciate pig field on the left. When the route reaches the Cheltenham Circular Path, it turns left (east) across a wild field, crossing Hatherley Brook by an impressive footbridge and then turning right and going south along Hatherley Brook to Church Road. At Church Road the route turns left and follows the road until it reaches St Peter's Church. Here there is another choice to make. The longest circuit continues along Church Road until it reaches the footpath between Moorend Stream and the allotments. A slightly shorter route, turns left at St Peter's and follows the Cheltenham Circular Path northwest to Moat Cottage, where there is an intersection of four paths. Here the route turns right, past Moat Cottage on the right to reach Kidnappers Lane. It crosses Lotts Meadow to the gate at the north end from where the path follows Moorend Stream until it reaches the smallholdings again.

The slightly longer route follows Moorend Stream from the allotment, either via Lotts Meadow or through Burrows Field on the other side of Moorend Stream. There are shorter variants that cut off sections of the long circuit by heading straight back to the four-way footpath intersection at Moat Cottage. The route is clearer following the photographs and descriptions below.

One can start also these circular walks also from the car park in Burrows Field, the roads north of Burrows Field, from Church Road, from Farm Lane and from the A46 via the access track through the smallholdings or via the path along Moorend Stream which continue to the A46 (not shown on map). The Leckhampton Fields Circular Path is used by residents from all directions and further afield, including from Charlton Kings and inner Cheltenham.

## **Loop walks**

There are several loop walks round fields that are particularly used by dog walkers.

1. From Warden Hill and Shurdington Road along track through the small holdings and a loop round Robinswood Field or round Lotts Meadow.
2. Via the Cheltenham Circular Path across Farm Lane into White Cross Green, around these fields and back via the Cheltenham Circular Path.
3. From Burrows Field car park across Burrows Field and Lotts Meadow.
4. A loop around Lotts Meadow from small parking space (2 cars) where the public footpath from Moat Cottage crosses Kidnappers Lane.

## **Footpath maintenance**

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council regularly maintains all of the walks on the Leckhampton Fields, cutting back nettles, brambles, tree branches, hedges and other obstructions. Local people also maintain some of the paths of their own accord. Various local volunteers regularly pick up litter along Church Road, Kidnappers Lane and Farm Lane.

## **Views along the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path**

These photographs follow the route of the circular path as described above starting and ending in the smallholdings. The long circuit is described first that goes to Farm Lane and to Church Road. Three main routes are shown, but as noted earlier the network of footpaths makes it possible to choose a variety of circuits. All routes, however, pass along the footpath through the small holdings, and there is no doubt that this section of the path is greatly loved by many people for its charm, interest, animals and wilderness areas.

The photographs below which follow and describe the route of the path show some of its varied rural landscape. The views change with the seasons and the photographs show something of this. Most (37 out of 54) of the photographs were taken on two afternoons in December 2014 for the purpose of this submission. The loop walks on Lotts Meadow, Robinswood Field and White Cross Green are shown in separate annexes with photographs of each of these areas.





Path through the smallholdings





Path through the smallholdings. The northern smallholding are on the right.



One of the northern smallholdings along the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path





The access track to the smallholdings. This also provides access to the Leckhampton Fields and the Circular Path from Warden Hill and Shurdington Road. The northern smallholdings are on the left.



Circular Path heading south from the smallholdings into Robinswood Field



Following the west hedge of Robinswood Field



Up Kidnappers Lane to the corner where the Lane bears left and the path bears right.



At the bend the path bears right heads across the field on the other side of this fence.



To the right is a view of two of the old Leckhampton cottages.





The longer circuit heads west across the fields to Farm Lane. The land here has an unusual form of sliding gate. The top slides across and one can then walk through the V.



To the right are stables.



To the north there is a view towards Moat Cottage. The shorter version of the circular path run along the hedge on the left and goes straight to Moat cottage.



The longer circuit crosses the main tributary of Hatherley Brook and climbs back to Farm Lane. There are two fields on the map, but the boundary hedge has been removed. Both are owned by GCC and used for horse grazing.





Looking back along the path. Hatherley Brook runs along the line of trees.



The circular path follows south along Farm Lane besides a pig field. In the distance one is looking across Hatherley Brook to one of the old cottages.



Past the pig field, the Circular Path turns left following onto the Cheltenham Circular Path back to Hatherley Brook. The path runs over a pretty ungrazed field with an abundance of blackberry bushes and grasses.



From the footpath, looking south towards Leckhampton Hill.



From the footpath looking north across the field.



From the footpath, looking south with Leckhampton Court Farm on the right. This is an example of the type of recent development that has blended in well.





From the path, looking south along the line of Hatherley Brook on the left, marked by the willows.



After crossing Hatherley Brook by a sturdy footbridge, the route either continues to follow the Cheltenham Circular Path to Moat Cottage, or it turns right and follows Hatherley Brook (just visible on the right in this picture) and across the Church Farm fields to Church Road.





Shorter route following the Cheltenham Circular Path to the four-path intersection at Moat Cottage



The longer circuit path follows Hatherley Brook through Church Farm fields to Church Road. This view is looking north



Same view in winter



View from the path looking back across the Church Farm land to one of the old cottages. Moat cottage is visible in the centre by the two tall poplars.





Same view across Church Farm fields in May



View of Leckhampton Hill across the Church Farm fields.



At Church Road, the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path turns left and follow along Church Road to St Peter's Church..



This is the view the other way, west towards the Crippets junction and Leckhampton Lane. A much longer version of the walks turns left at the junction, up via the Crippets to follow the Cotswold Way National Trail to Leckhampton Hill and back down the Cheltenham Circular Path to St Peter's Church. On the right are old orchards.





Old orchard at the corner of Church Road and Farm Lane



Another view in the old orchard.



Church Road by St Peter's Church. This path is part of the Cheltenham Circular Walk



St Peter's Church from Church Road.





Another view of St Peter's from Church Road



From St Peter's Church one can either continue along Church Road or follow the Cheltenham Circular Path north past the Medieval moat to Moat Cottage. Here the route turns right at the intersection of four paths and follows the shorter circuit which is described right at the end.



The longer circuit continues along Church Road past Leckhampton Manor, which dates from about 1315 and is now a Sue Ryder hospice. The fields in the foreground below the Manor are in the Cotswold AONB.



Allotments with Leckhampton Primary School in the background





Path along Moorend Stream looking south. The allotments are over the hedge on the left.



Moorend streams is the boundary between Burrows Sports ground above (looking south towards Leckhampton Hill) or through Lotts Meadow below looking north along the path with Moorend Stream on the right in the line of willows.



By either route, the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path then continue again along along Moorend Stream and back to the smallholdings. This view is looking south. The stream is to the left and the field north of Lotts Meadow is across the hedge to the right.





Path along Moorend Stream



Field north of Lotts Meadow from the Path along Moorend Stream, looking towards the nursery/orchards site



Field north of Lotts Meadow from the path along Moorend Stream, looking north towards the boundary hedge of the smallholdings.



Path along Moorend Stream by the smallholdings, looking south.





Smallholdings in snow



Northern smallholdings



The shorter version of the circular walk heads south from the bend in Kidnapper Lane to Moat Cottage.



On the way, the path passes a small pond, which is probably part of what may be a Medieval feature on the land north of Moat Cottage, shown below.





The Path passes to two old cottages





Beside Moat Cottage, four paths cross at the point the walker in red is standing. The path on the right, with two walkers is the Cheltenham Circular Path. This turns right at the intersection and goes to past the Medieval moat to St Peter's Church and then climbs up Leckhampton Hill. At St Peters the Leckhampton Fields Circular Path turns left and joins the route of the longer circuit along Church Road to the footpath along Moorend Stream.



The alternative at the four path intersection is to take the path to the left, over a stile and to the left of Moat Cottage. The path passes this field on the right and two other old cottages on the left (below) to reach Kidnappers Lane. The route crosses Kidnappers Lane, into Lotts Meadow and across the Meadow to the path along Moorend Stream and back to the smallholdings.



## APPENDIX 6 - The Smallholdings



One of the northern smallholdings



One of the northern smallholdings at the northeast corner of the land.



Smallholdings in winter.





One of the northern smallholding allotments. Much of the soil is grade 2. This is the reason that there were so many nurseries on the Leckhampton Fields until the closure of the Cheltenham market put them out of business.



Southern smallholdings taken from the footpath along Moorend Stream.



One of the northern smallholdings. There are hen, geese and ducks on the smallholdings



View across one of the southern smallholdings. The field beyond the gate is the western of the two field north of Lotts Meadow.





Southern smallholding



The access road from the A46. This is also the access route for walkers and dog walkers from Warden Hill.





Southern smallholdings



West end of southern smallholdings, with Robinswood Field and Leckhampton Hill in the background



Summer flowers in the smallholdings. The willows contribute to the great attractiveness of the southern smallholding.



Some of the southern smallholdings have become quite wild, but still have an attractive wilderness character.

## APPENDIX 7 – Robinswood Field



Walkers using the Leckhampton Circular Footpath. Robinswood is the name of the house on the left.



Perimeter path long the south side of Robinswood Field. The boundary of the nursery/orchards site is on the right.





The nurseries/orchards site from the south end of Robinswood Field in summer before the grass is cut for hay.



View of the nurseries/orchard site from the southwest corner of Robinswood Field in December.



Boundary fence on the southwest side. The boundary on the OS map is the hedge further south. It is not certain which is the actual boundary.



The perimeter path at the north end of the field.



Several perimeter paths crossing the east side of the field.



The strip of land on the south side of Robinswood. This would be important for visually separation any development on the nurseries/orchard site from any development on the field west of Robinswood Field.





Looking north along the east boundary hedge to the smallholdings in the distance.



Robinswood with Leckhampton Hill in the background. The Leckhampton Circular footpath is on the right.



The field west of Robinswood Field is actually two fields. The southern field is a hay/grass meadow; the northern field was grazed by sheep until 2014, when it seems that the tenants were probably evicted. Local people greatly missed not seeing the fields of skipping lambs in 2014.



## APPENDIX 8 - Lotts Meadow



Path between Burrow Field and Kidnappers Lane



Pond at the north end of Lotts Meadow, which forms when the water table is high in winter and wet periods in summer.





The lines of willow along the east side of Lotts Meadow. Moorend stream flows through the willows on the right.



Looking south across Lotts Meadow towards Leckhampton Hill.



View from the north corner of Lotts Meadow in winter.



Lotts Meadow is heavily used by walkers dog walkers.



Winter scene with the poplars in Kidnappers Lane in the background.



Hedgerows and trees separating Lotts Meadow from the nursery/orchards site.





Lotts meadow is lightly grazed by cattle



Same view in Autumn



Like many Leckhampton fields, Lotts Meadow is buttercups brilliant in May

## APPENDIX 9 – White Cross Green Fields



From southeast corner, with Farm Lane to the right.





Leckhampton Hill from White Cross Green Fields



One of the ancient hedgerows, which are also a haven for wildlife.





The edge of the Brizen Lane and the Lanes Estate from the north west edge of the fields.



Fields viewed from the north west corner. The west side of the site is the flood plain of the Warden Hill tributary of Hatherley Brook. This tributary was largely responsible for the devastating flooding of Warden Hill in July 2007.



Showing how resident in Brizen Lane currently have direct access from their properties onto the White Cross Green site.



Showing the hedgerows in summer



Fields in buttercups



Leckhampton Environmental Report

LECKHAMPTON GREEN FIELDS  
THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN  
by Tony Meredith

My wife and I have now reached our 20th year in regularly monitoring the wild bird population of the Green Fields between Leckhampton Village and the Shurdington Road. As shown on the attached map, the area covered lies between Farm Lane on the west and Merlin Way/Moorend Grove/Leckhampton School on the east. Also shown is the regular route of our monthly bird survey over public footpaths and trackways which conveniently enable quite extensive coverage with the aid of binoculars.

The attached species' checklist shows the last 10 years in terms of Quarterly Summaries derived from the monthly surveys.

It also shows the birds grouped into 3 Categories. The first and largest contains 35 species resident all-year-round, the second shows 6 migrant species arriving in the Summer for nesting and breeding on site, whilst the third has 5 Winter migrants which are regularly seen resting and feeding in the site's fields and hedgerows. The third category includes 3 Gull species which are not strictly migrants but they tend to move inland in winter from their summer coastal estuaries and rivers, particularly where sportsfields provide easy pickings.

The species are listed using standard English names and in the family sequence (K.H.Voos) adopted in the Collins Guidebooks. The second column of the checklist shows which of the species are of Conservation Concern as published in the most recent update of "Birds of Conservation Concern" (No 3 issued 2009). That document's text and classification lists are the result of consultation between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), RSPB, WWT, Natural England, Countryside Commission for Wales, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage etc.

The conclusions to be drawn from the checklist are, we believe, as follows:-

i) The Green Fields and their tree-lined hedgerows are particularly valuable for Red-listed Song Thrush, of which there are several very visible and audible residents on site.

ii) Amber-listed Mistle Thrush is another species whose numbers are nationally in decline but whose continuing all-year presence in this area is assisted by the ancient fruiting hedges and trees which provide sources for mistletoe, fruits and insect food.

iii) Green Woodpecker is another Amber-listed bird whose presence is a notable feature of the area. Sadly its diminutive cousin the Red-listed Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, now in dramatic national decline, has been seen less here also. It was last reliably seen here in late 2007 and early 2008 but the removal of the species' favourite habitat of old apple orchards off Kidnappers Lane and in the Smallholdings close to Shurdington Road means it is unlikely to reappear.

iv) Summer visitor Swallows and House-martins (both Amber-listed) are frequently seen over the pond in Lotts Meadow. At low sun the rectangular outline of shallow grass bank suggests the pond may once have been the Manorial Fishpond of the earlier moated Manor-House. It is used not only as drinking water by these Summer species but also as a source of mud for nest building.

v) The reduction in sightings of Kestrel in the area has been offset by increased views of Sparrowhawk. The increase in heavier rainfall leading to ground saturation and more frequent flooding may well have reduced the population of small rodents in the Green Fields thereby causing the Kestrels to move away. In contrast the Sparrowhawks have plenty of avian species to feed upon. To this extent the regular sighting of Sparrowhawks is a good indicator of the value of this area for so many wildbird species.

We feel there is clear evidence that Leckhampton Green Fields provide a really worthwhile opportunity for people to appreciate a wide spectrum of British Wildbirds. Its value as a regular confirmed habitat for more than 45 species, of which 17 are either Red or Amber-listed is testament to its importance. This is not simply a green space in a crowded environment but is also a location where meaningful nature studies are possible. We owe it to future generations as well as to increasingly marginalised wildbirds to see that it is preserved and protected.







QUARTERLY TICK-SHEET (FROM MONTHLY SURVEYS)  
N.B. NO SURVEYS IN FIRST QTR OF 2013 OR SECOND QTR 2012

SPECIES LISTED		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
RESIDENT ALL-YEAR SPECIES ↓	BUZZARD		✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	SPARROWHAWK	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	KESTREL	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓					✓✓
	PHEASANT	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	STOCK DOVE	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	WOOD PIGEON	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	COLLARED DOVE	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	LITTLE OWL		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓		
	GREEN WOODPECKER	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	GR. SPOT. WOODPECKER	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER					✓✓✓						
	PIED WAGTAIL	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	DUNNOCK	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	ROBIN	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	MISTLE THRUSH	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	SONG THRUSH	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	BLACKBIRD	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	BLACKCAP	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	GOLDCREST	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	WREN	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	GREAT TIT	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	COAL TIT	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	BLUE TIT	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	LONG-TAILED TIT	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	TREECREEPER	✓✓			✓✓	✓✓						
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	CARRION CROW	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
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	HOUSE SPARROW	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
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	GOLDFINCH	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	GREENFINCH	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
	BULLFINCH	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
SUMMER VISITOR SPECIES ↓	SWIFT	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
	SWALLOW		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	HOUSE MARTIN	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	WHITETHROAT	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓		✓✓	✓✓
	LESSER WHITETHROAT	✓		✓	✓				✓✓		✓✓	✓✓
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	BLACK-HEADED GULL	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	COMMON GULL	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	LESSER BLACKBACK	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	REDWING	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	FIELDFARE	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓



# Rise of the blue tit

## Numbers soar as blackbird and robin populations dive

By Ben Spencer  
Science Reporter

THE brightly coloured blue tit is known as a friendly and adaptable bird, always happy to pay a visit to a thoughtfully placed garden feeder or nesting box.

And according to a survey, the species is now second on the RSPB's list of most-spotted garden birds – its highest position since the poll began in 1979.

The Big Garden Birdwatch has revealed that the distinctive bird, loved for its acrobatic feeding habits, is now seen in three out of every four gardens.

Experts believe its rise is partly due to the boom in garden feeders and nesting boxes, which allow blue tits to survive the winter.

Daniel Hayhow, conservation scientist at the RSPB, said: 'Blue tits are increasing nationally, and we think it is down to the increasing food in the garden. They also benefit from bird boxes.'

'Blue tits are most prevalent in urban and suburban areas. They are not shy about coming to gardens, and will feed on most food types that we put out.'

'That means they are perhaps better able to survive winters.'

Sparrows remain the most common birds in British gardens despite their numbers dropping by nearly two-thirds over the last 35 years. Last year's second most popular species, blackbirds, have dropped to fourth on the list, while

# TOP 20 GARDEN BIRDS

Last year's  
position

% change  
since  
1979

Last year's  
position

% change  
since  
1979

1: House sparrow	(1)	-62.1	12: Dunnock	(12)	1.6
2: Blue tit	(3)	0.7	13: Long-tailed tit	(10)	n/a
3: Starling	(4)	-84.2	14: Feral pigeon	(15)	n/a
4: Blackbird	(2)	-45.8	15: Greenfinch	(16)	n/a
5: Woodpigeon	(5)	742.5	16: Jackdaw	(17)	-44.4
6: Chaffinch	(6)	-50.1	17: Coal tit	(14)	n/a
7: Goldfinch	(8)	n/a	18: Carrion crow	(18)	181.8
8: Great tit	(7)	39	19: Wren	(20)	n/a
9: Collared dove	(11)	315.1	20: Great spotted woodpecker	(25)	11.4
10: Robin	(9)	-45.1			
11: Magpie	(13)	129.6			

Source: RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch

Blue tit

Goldfinch

House  
sparrow

Starling

Source: RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch

goldfinches have climbed another place since last year, and now perch at number seven.

The robin, which has been as high as number seven in the past decade, has dropped back to tenth place. And there has been a new entry to the top 20 – for the first time ever the great spotted woodpecker squeezed in at number 20.

However experts said they were still concerned by the decline of some of the species.

Numbers of starlings and song thrushes have dropped by an alarming 84 and 81 per cent respec-

tively since Birdwatch began its survey 35 years ago. Both are on the UK 'red list' – meaning they are of the highest conservation concern.

There is slightly better news for the house sparrow, as its decline has slowed and it remains the most commonly seen bird in British gardens. However, it remains on the red list as numbers have dropped by 62 per cent since 1979.

Richard Bashford, Big Garden Birdwatch organiser, said: 'The winter has been so mild, and we wondered if it would have a significant impact on garden birds. They

were out in the wider countryside finding natural food instead of taking up our hospitality.'

'But the good news is that this may mean we have more birds in our gardens in the coming breeding season because more survived the mild winter.'

Martin Harper, RSPB conservation director, added: 'Many garden birds rely on us humans for help.'

'Blue tits are adaptable garden birds. If we put up a nest box, leave out some food or let our gardens grow a bit wild they'll be among the first to take advantage.'



Mrs A Winstone  
Clerk, Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council  
7 Aldershaw Close  
Up Hatherley  
Cheltenham GL51 3TP

Cllr Adrian Mears  
Chair, Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council  
21 Collum End Rise  
Leckhampton  
Cheltenham GL53 0PA

24 January 2015

### **Local Green Space at Leckhampton**

I would like to very strongly support a designation of Local Green Space at Leckhampton. These fields are very special to my family and this letter incorporates our response to the Parish Council public consultation questions. I would like the Parish and Borough councils to consider carefully which areas to be designated since I am a particular fan of the northern fields and smallholdings and the open view of Leckhampton Hill and AONB they provide to residents and visitors alike from the A46 Shurdington Road.

As the author of the original 2009 Liberal Democrat policy for 'a special designation comparable to SSSI to allow the protection of allotments and other green spaces of particular value to the health and wellbeing of local people'<sup>1</sup>, I can say that the Leckhampton green fields are exactly the kind of local green space the policy is intended to protect: where repeated public campaigns and costly and time-consuming planning applications, local plan development processes and inspections have continually reaffirmed its value to local people and rejected development but where developers nevertheless launch relentless attacks on it.

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<sup>1</sup> Liberal Democrat Policy Paper 93 *Our Natural Heritage*, published and passed by Autumn Conference 2009.



The lack of a designation simply for the intrinsic value of green spaces to local people was a major loophole in planning law and regulation which otherwise protected areas only of scientific interest or outstanding natural beauty or which contributed to specific Green Belt functions. The green fields at Leckhampton do not qualify under any previous designation yet for the communities around them they provide accessible and enjoyable rights of way for free exercise and recreation which we know is good for our mental and physical health, absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> and particulate pollution, habitats for wildlife including bats and deer, local food, tranquillity and simple enjoyment with beautiful views of the Cotswold escarpment and a sense of the countryside for urban children in particular.

The Local Green Space policy was subsequently incorporated into the Liberal Democrat manifesto<sup>2</sup> and then the Coalition Programme for Government<sup>3</sup> - both of which again referenced the intended comparability with SSSIs – and then the government’s natural environment white paper<sup>4</sup> and finally the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>5</sup>. In the famous footnote 9 to the NPPF’s central statement on sustainable development, the NPPF specifically identifies the LGS as one of those designations, also including SSSIs, Green Belt, AONB and National Parks, which can specifically be used to qualify that policy and protect areas against development. The Leckhampton fields’ allocation for development in any draft plan should not therefore override the proper consideration of it as a Local Green Space during the plan-making process.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Local Green Space policy was designed with the protection of the Leckhampton fields in mind and a designation here could provide a national case study in the use of the new policy.

I would like to congratulate Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council on its early use of the policy in 2013 and Cheltenham Borough Council for taking such a pro-active approach to designating local areas within its next Local Plan. It is a disgrace that the local Joint Core Strategy process has intentionally ignored the designation and the Leckhampton application (and good grounds for its rejection as unsound but I hope this consultation and the Cheltenham Borough Council assessment will produce substantial new evidence that Leckhampton’s fields should be protected and that, even at this late stage, this will be recognised in the Joint Core Strategy.

I have answered the Parish Council’s specific questions below, as well as adding some more detailed thoughts on the Leckhampton fields and specifically on the definition of ‘extensive’ in the context both of the LGS policy and the local area.

Thank you again for taking such a strong lead on Local Green Space policy.

Yours sincerely

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<sup>2</sup> Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010, p82: ‘Create a new designation – similar to Site of Special Scientific Interest status – to protect green areas of particular importance or value to the community.’

<sup>3</sup> The Coalition: our programme for government, HMG May 2010, p11: ‘We will maintain the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other environmental protections, and create a new designation – similar to SSSIs – to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.’

<sup>4</sup> The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, HMG 2011, p49, para 4.23

<sup>5</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 76-78, pp18-19, and footnote 9, p4



**Martin Horwood MP**

Member of Parliament for Cheltenham

cc: Erin Tattersall, GRCC  
Cllr Steve Jordan, Leader, Cheltenham Borough Council  
Tracey Crews, Head of Planning, Cheltenham Borough Council

**Submission to consultation on the Leckhampton Fields Local Green Space designation  
January 2015**

**Supporting document**

**A. Answers to specific Leckhampton consultation questions**

**B. Are the Leckhampton Fields an 'extensive' tract of land?**

**C. Policy arguments in favour of protecting the Leckhampton Fields as Local Green Space**

- 1. Designation would be consistent with the current valid Local Plan**
- 2. Designation would not contradict the emerging Joint Core Strategy, in which the inclusion of this land at Leckhampton is extremely contentious and to which there are many significant unresolved objections.**
- 3. Designation is consistent with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan as described in the concept drafted by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council**
- 4. Designation is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework**

**A. Answers to specific Leckhampton consultation questions** (on behalf of myself and four other members of my family)

1. How often over the year do you use the Leckhampton Fields and footpaths?  
Today: ☒ Occasionally  
In the past: ☒ Many times a month
2. How do you use the fields?  
Today: ☒ Walking ☒ With children + ☒ Views to & from the escarpment  
In the past: ☒ Walking ☒ Dog walking + ☒ Views to & from the escarpment



*Grandmother & grandson watching the pigs in 2006: possibly the greatest value of the Leckhampton Fields are their accessibility on foot to young and old, very different to the very steep Cotswold scarp nearby.*

3. Which areas/footpaths do you particularly use?  
☒ Footpaths through the small holdings  
☒ Fields and footpaths between Kidnappers' Lane, Farm Lane and Church Road  
☒ Footpath and field by Robinswood
4. What do you most value?  
☒ ☒ Farm animals  
☒ ☒ Network of footpaths  
☒ ☒ Views of Leckhampton Hill  
☒ Trees  
☒ Orchards  
☒ Hedgerows  
☒ Rural atmosphere  
☒ Tranquility  
☒ Smallholdings



☒ Medieval cottages

5. How important are the Leckhampton Fields to you and why?



*My family and then Leglag chair Kit Brauholtz with then Mayor and Leckhampton councillor Robin MacDonald, christening a bench dedicated to my father Don Horwood, a co-founder of Leglag and one of those who had campaigned to save the Leckhampton fields for the community since the 1980s.*

The Leckhampton Fields have been enormously important to me and generations of my family for decades. My parents moved to Leckhampton from St Mark's in the 1960s and always valued the views and accessible countryside they provided. Our traditional outing to walk off Christmas day lunch was a family excursion through the Leckhampton Fields and up the Crippetts beyond. I grew up watching the pigs and walking the family dog regularly through the lanes and smallholdings at Robinswood. I think it's wonderful that we still have that farmland, smallholdings and nurseries despite the planning blight, consequent short leases and underinvestment that have afflicted them for years. Clear protection would offer the chance of a really well-planned area of local food production from which children could learn the real origin of food is not a supermarket shelf. I've now taken my children to meet the pigs hundreds of times and taken them on walks and even bat-finding.



*Sami with bat detector before ecologist Dr Elizabeth Pimley's bat walk through the Leckhampton Fields and hedgerows in 2013*

Since being elected as Cheltenham's MP in 2010 I have campaigned consistently for their protection – and I have found cross-party consensus in favour of their protection amongst all my parliamentary opponents in three elections, and amongst all Leckhampton's other elected representatives at parish, borough and county level. Along with those other elected representatives, I have had overwhelming support from local people for the protection of these fields, evidenced by thousands of letters, participants in protest meeting and walks, emails, tweets, petition signatures and votes over decades. I cannot imagine any green spaces more demonstrably special to their local community



*Local people walking in support of the Leckhampton Fields in 2012*





*Taking the battle to parliament in 2009*

6. How important to you and to Cheltenham are the views from Leckhampton Hill across the Leckhampton Fields – the view towards the Malverns and Shropshire and the view across the green belt to Wales?



*Views across Leckhampton from the top of Leckhampton Hill in different weather– the Leckhampton fields are even more prominent from lower down the hill.*



The encroachment of the conurbations of Cheltenham and Gloucester onto the Vale countryside visible from Leckhampton Hill is almost complete with the town and city almost joining and more open countryside too far away to be important to the view. The nearby Leckhampton fields are immediately and prominently visible from the escarpment and are the most obvious example of open fields in view on the flood plain below the slopes of the hill itself.

7. How much do you think it would damage the views if development came closer to the hill?

The loss of the Leckhampton Fields to development would leave a sad picture of urban sprawl from Leckhampton Hill, thereby contradicting the adopted Cotswolds AONB management plan 2013-18 which asks local authorities to protect the setting of the AONB. <sup>6</sup>

**B. Are the Leckhampton Fields an 'extensive' tract of land?**

It has been suggested that the land at Leckhampton is too 'extensive' to be considered for LGS status. This is categorically wrong.

The NPPF guidance makes clear **"there are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgement will inevitably be needed"**.

The original Liberal Democrat policy and the Coalition Agreement (see cover letter) compared the LGS deliberately to SSSIs while the guidance says that it should not used to create "a new area of Green Belt by another name".

Green belts are clearly 'extensive tracts of land'. SSSIs and LGS are not.

The following size comparisons make it quite clear that areas comparable to or larger than the Leckhampton LGS application area have frequently been protected in the local context as parks or SSSIs and that its area is not remotely comparable to those of Green Belts, which are genuinely extensive tracts of land:

**Leckhampton 2013 LGS application area**                      56 hectares

**Nearest SSSI at Crickley Hill & Barrow Wake**                      55 hectares

Smallest in England is Sylvan House Barn, Glos at 50m<sup>2</sup>/0.005ha; median & mean c 20ha

**Famous protected green spaces in Greater London:**

Hyde Park	142 hectares
Clapham Common	89 hectares
Kensington Gardens	111hectares
Green Park/St.James's Park	70 hectares

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/file/management-plan-review/final/management-plan-2013-18-adopted-pre-publication.pdf>

Hampstead Heath	320 hectares
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**Other local protected green spaces:**

Pittville Park	33 hectares
Lineover Wood	50 hectares
Dowdeswell Wood	82 hectares

**Green Belts:**

Cheltenham & Gloucester (the smallest in the country)	6,694 hectares
Average for England	114,286 hectares

Green Belts are genuinely extensive and an order of magnitude larger than SSSIs which are several tens of hectares are exactly comparable with the LGS requested in Leckhampton.

## **C. Policy arguments in favour of protecting the Leckhampton Fields as Local Green Space**

### **1. Designation would be consistent with the current valid Local Plan**

The **Cheltenham Local Plan (2nd review 2006)** is still valid and is relevant to all current planning decisions. This was reinforced at planning appeal as recently as September last year (Appeal Ref: APP/B1605/A/13/2199178).

The **National Planning Policy Framework** is absolutely clear that it aims to ‘strengthen local decision making’ (paragraph 208). It specifies that the planning system must be ‘plan-led’ (paragraph 196) and that ‘**for the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the Local Plan (and the London Plan) should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework’ (paragraph 211). Specifically it says that after March 2013 ‘due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework’ (paragraph 216). As set out later, the protection of the land at Leckhampton is entirely consistent with the core planning principles and key elements of the NPPF relating to sustainability, the empowerment of local people, protecting the countryside and recognising its ‘intrinsic character’, conserving the natural environment and prioritising the use of previously developed (brownfield) land.**

The Local Plan sets out the challenge for councillors considering applications on the urban fringe:

'Cheltenham owes much to its setting at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment. The town's eastern fringes include the high quality scenery of the escarpment, with landscape and woodlands that are amongst the most attractive in the English countryside...

About 38% of the Borough is countryside. It accommodates the activities of agriculture, forestry and recreation as well as providing habitats for a diversity of wildlife... **The countryside is also under continued pressure from developers, especially for residential development, which threatens to erode its character. These problems are most acute on the urban fringes.'**

*Cheltenham Borough Local Plan second review, July 2006, paragraphs 7.1 & 7.2*

The Plan then specifically addresses the 'unallocated land' at Leckhampton:

## UNALLOCATED LAND AT LECKHAMPTON

7.40 Land at Leckhampton has been the subject of development pressure for a number of years. The Inspector considering objections into the Second Review of Cheltenham Borough Local Plan concluded that, "development of the objection site would materially harm the rural character and appearance of the area, and the important contribution that this makes to the landscape within the site and when seen from the AONB."

**7.41 The Council supports the Inspector's conclusions and considers that the intrinsic value of the land should be protected as a resource for its recreational, landscape, wildlife and archaeological interest.** Any proposals for development within this area will be considered against policies CO 1 (landscape character) and CP3 (sustainable environment).

7.42 In the consideration of growth, land at Leckhampton together with all potential development sites across the Borough will be reassessed within the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West to inform Cheltenham's emerging Local Development Framework. This will require cross boundary working with Tewkesbury Borough Council and relevant communities.

Protection would also be consistent with the following specific Local Plan policies:

- **Policy CP 1: Sustainable development** (objectives O6 and O7)

**Development will be permitted only where it takes adequate account of the principles of sustainable development (note 1). In particular, development should:**

- (a) conserve or enhance natural resources and environmental assets; and**
- (b) give priority to the use of previously developed land (notes 2 and 3); and**
- (c) make the most efficient and effective use of land (note 3).**

Note 1 to this policy says that 'each of the principles of sustainable development set out in table 2 may be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.' Table 2 sets out the principles of sustainable development and includes the following relevant to Leckhampton:

- **protecting sites of archaeological and historic interest and their settings**
- **conserving green space and trees**
- **safeguarding attractive landscape**



- protecting and creating wildlife habitats
  - protecting the quality of water, land and air
  - minimising the risk of flooding
  - reducing gases causing climate change
  - using brownfield land before Greenfield
  - ensuring that specific groups of the population are not disadvantaged by development
  - protecting and improving personal and community health
  - promoting and enhancing quality of life
- **Policy CP 3: Sustainable environment** (objectives O9, O11, O12, O16, O18 and O30)

**Development will be permitted only where it would:**

- (a) not harm the setting of Cheltenham (note 1), including views into or out of areas of acknowledged importance (note 2); and**
- (b) not harm landscape character (note 3); and**
- (c) conserve or enhance the best (note 4) of the built and natural environments; and**
- (d) safeguard and promote biodiversity (note 5); and**
- (e) not give rise to harmful levels of pollution (note 6) to land, air or water (surface or ground); and**
- (f) minimise the risk of flooding (note 7).**

\* This is one of the policies which the Local Plan explicitly states does apply to Leckhampton (see above).

Notes 1 and 3 refer explicitly to the Cotswolds AONB and Note 1 explains that the ‘Setting’ of Cheltenham is defined as those features which create the distinctive sense of place for the Borough, including the Cotswold escarpment and its green spaces – which are directly relevant to the Leckhampton site which is directly under the Cotswold escarpment and adjacent to and visible from the AONB at Leckhampton Hill.

Note 4 to this policy explains that conserving or enhancing the ‘best’ of the natural environment means conserving or enhancing features which make a significant contribution to the character, appearance, amenity or conservation of a site or locality. The character and quality of the land at Leckhampton has been repeatedly referenced by planning inspectors.

In 1993 **Inspector Brian Dodds** ruled that ‘the land at Leckhampton should be protected for its special historical, landscape and amenity value’.

In 2003 **Inspector Mary Travers**, conducting an enquiry into an earlier plan to develop the same land, reported that the area had ‘a gently rolling, topography and an attractive pastoral character that in my view links strongly into the landscape of the AONB.. it is apparent that development would entail a significant intrusion into views of the open countryside and the AONB from the existing edge of the built-up area.. its visual impact on the surrounding countryside would be very significant and that it could not be easily mitigated.”

Even by the recent Amec review commissioned for the JCS team waxed lyrical about the area:

‘Located between the A46 Shurdington Road and the Cotswold AONB, this land forms part of the countryside which separates Cheltenham and Gloucester.

The landform is gently undulating at around 70-80m AOD and land use is mainly pasture. Whilst woodland cover is limited, there is a large network of hedgerows, most of which are very well maintained at a variety of heights with occasional trees. This creates various levels of enclosure, giving an impression of a well-wooded landscape in flatter area. There is a very prominent landform and field pattern to the south adjacent to the AONB which is vulnerable to change and is considered to be a valuable landscape resource. Only a small area has limited intrinsic landscape value where previous character has already been lost.

There are key views from national trail/public rights of way within the AONB to the south of the area from Hartley Hill and Shurdington Hill. The area displays unusual land use patterns with many small holdings, orchards and allotment/market gardens with a good brookline and associated tree cover. The area displays a mosaic of habitat types with good connections to the east, south and west.’

- **Policy CP 4 *Safe and sustainable living*** (objectives O3, O4, O16, O23 and O32)

**Development will be permitted only where it would:**

- (a) not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of adjoining land users and the locality (notes 1- 4); and**
- (b) not result in levels of traffic to and from the site attaining an environmentally unacceptable level; and**
- (c) make adequate provision for security and the prevention of crime and disorder (note 5); and (d) not, by nature of its size, location, layout or design, give rise to crime or the significant fear of crime or endanger public safety; and**
- (e) maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre and district and local shopping facilities.**

Leckhampton’s fields have a unique network of public rights of way close to an urban population which give access to an area of rural and agricultural character on reasonably flat and accessible land. The steep Cotswold escarpment and AONB nearby have many wonderful qualities but accessibility is not one of them, even for those with modest mobility issues (including toddlers and young children as well as older residents). Nor does much of the farmland in the adjacent Green Belt further outside Cheltenham provide anything like the same levels of access with far fewer public rights of way, since they do not share the legacy of Leckhampton’s village history. Even if development preserved most of the public rights of way, they would no longer provide free access to green space in the same way, thereby removing an amenity which is proven to reduce health inequalities.



*The site's unique close network of public rights of way on reasonably level, accessible green land provides an important amenity to an urban population – in contrast to Green Belt farmland further outside Cheltenham or the steep escarpment within the AONB.*

- **Policy CP 7 Design** (objective O2)

**Development will only be permitted where it:**

- (a) is of a high standard of architectural design; and**
- (b) adequately reflects principles of urban design; and**
- (c) complements and respects neighbouring development and the character of the locality and/or landscape (note 3).**

**Extensions or alterations of existing buildings will be required to avoid:**

- (d) causing harm to the architectural integrity of the building or group of buildings; and**
- (e) the unacceptable erosion of open space around the existing building.**

LGS designation here here would strongly reinforce part e) of this policy.

- **Policy GE 2 Private green space** (objectives O12 and O18)

**The development of private green areas, open spaces and gardens which make a significant townscape and environmental contribution to the town will not be permitted.**

Note 3 explains that 'In determining whether a green space has a significant townscape and environmental value, the Council will have regard, among other factors, to its contribution to the following:

- (a) the spacious character of the town;
- (b) the quality of the local townscape;
- (c) the established character of the locality;
- (d) the setting of an important building or group of buildings;
- (e) important landmarks, views and vistas within and out of Cheltenham;



This list of considerations is not intended to be exclusive.'

The Leckhampton site qualifies on many of these grounds, especially a) c) d) and e). It provides a green landscape within the urban area which also provides a setting for views of Leckhampton Hill from the town. The wider site contains an important ancient historical site and the development would remove an important sense of space in the locality which currently benefits residents of Hatherley and Warden Hill, the Lanes and Leckhampton itself. Development here would contribute to the growing sense of continuous urban sprawl.



*The extraordinarily open view of Leckhampton Hill from the A46 Shurdington Road within urban Cheltenham (the Lanes and housing around Kidnappers Lane are immediately to the right, Warden Hill is behind the camera and Cheltenham's central built-up area begins just to the left). Development on the northern fields of Leckhampton would lose this view and in my view contravene Local Plan policies CP3, GE2 and CO1.*

- **Policy GE 6 Trees and development** (objective O12)

**Development which would cause permanent damage to trees of high value (note 1) will not be permitted.**

**The following may be required in conjunction with development:**

- (a) the retention of existing trees; and**
- (b) the planting of new trees (note 3); and**
- (c) measures adequate to ensure the protection of trees during construction works.**

Note 1 explains that 'High value' does not mean some exceptional or rare tree but any sound and healthy tree with at least 10 years of life remaining which makes a significant contribution to the character or appearance of a site or locality. There are many trees in the site that would meet this criterion (see photo and aerial view on previous page).



- **Policy CO 1 *Landscape character*** (objectives O9, O10 and O12)

**Development will only be permitted where it would not harm:**

- (a) attributes (note 1) and features (note 2) which make a significant contribution to the character, distinctiveness, quality and amenity value of the landscape; and**
- (b) the visual amenity of the landscape.**

\* This is another policy which the Local Plan explicitly states does apply to Leckhampton (see above).

Note 1 explains that ‘attributes’ of the landscape are defined as being the inherent characteristics of the locality, including openness or enclosure, key views or vistas, topography, and patterns in the landscape such as those defined by historic land uses, roads and lanes, buildings, hedgerows or water courses. Note 2 explains that ‘Features’ include those constituent parts of the landscape that either in their own right, or in combination with landscape attributes, give the locality its particular character and distinctiveness, including for example, trees, hedges, geological or geomorphological features, rights of way, watercourses, ponds and buildings as well as other structures.

This distinctive overall ‘rural character’ of the land at Leckhampton is clear to see in the area itself and has been repeatedly referenced over the years by inspectors at appeal, by the AMEC review, by the Parish Council concept for the LGS designation and, of course, in the Local Plan itself as detailed at the outset of this section.

- 2. Designation would not contradict the emerging Joint Core Strategy, in which the inclusion of this land at Leckhampton is extremely contentious and to which there are many significant unresolved objections.**

Paragraph 216 of **the National Planning Policy Framework** is clear that ‘decision-takers *may* also give weight’ to emerging plans – in our case the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) that will also determine many aspects of the new Cheltenham Local Plan. Three factors are then listed as relevant:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given)
- **The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and**
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

The latest draft of the JCS does include development of an urban extension covering the land at Leckhampton but this is hugely contentious and it is quite possible that if even some of a number of factors influence later versions of the JCS that the allocation envisaged at Leckhampton may be sharply reduced or even removed altogether:

- This LGS designation exercise and the emerging Leckhampton Neighbourhood Plan
- Changes to the JCS housing model to refocus on environmental and social factors not just economic ones, leading to reduced growth rate in housing for inward migration;
- Reduced absolute numbers through more accurate and appropriate modelling, eg ONS spring 2014 figures
- Reduced absolute numbers on the basis that the projected numbers cannot be met sustainably
- Rebalancing towards more dispersed development not urban extensions
- Rebalancing of allocations between Cheltenham and other areas. Cheltenham's projected need in the JCS documents is actually 10,000 not the 10,849 actually allocated. This adjustment alone could remove most of the allocation at Leckhampton.
- Addition to the JCS plan, if necessary, of well-planned new settlements instead of urban extensions, for instance at Sharpness, Highnam or elsewhere.

All of these are being argued for by various submissions to the JCS.

Opposition to the inclusion in the JCS of development at Leckhampton is being argued by:

- Both myself as MP and my principal prospective parliamentary opponent who, between us, are likely to command some 90% of the popular vote at the next General Election (just as the Conservative candidate and I did at the last)
- All elected representatives of the area at District and County level
- Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council
- The Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce which favours development north-west of Cheltenham but wants the southern urban extension ruled out
- The Leckhampton Green Land Action Group which has recruited more than 1,000 local members over the years specifically to protect this land
- Almost every correspondent commenting on the plan in local media such as the Gloucestershire Echo
- Very large number of objections already made to this application and to the inclusion of Leckhampton in the JCS in the recent consultation.

Objections are being made on grounds of:

- Sustainability, including errors in the Sustainability Appraisal process
- The opportunity for the Leckhampton to be designated a Local Green Space
- Loss of amenity, especially to multiple rights of way for less mobile residents such as the very young, elderly and disabled who cannot access more challenging landscapes such as the AONB itself
- Compromising the setting of the AONB
- Health and free recreational value lost and impact on health inequalities
- Negative impact on local traffic congestion and air quality
- Flood risk, particularly to Warden Hill immediately downhill of the site
- Lack of infrastructure
- Climate change impact
- Economic impact of loss of ecosystem services and attractive setting for Cheltenham

In summary there are substantial, widely-shared and unresolved objections to the extremely controversial inclusion of Leckhampton in the latest version of the JCS. These clearly meet the



condition in paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework and so this element of the emerging JCS should not be accorded significant weight.

And, of course, the JCS still has to be reviewed in an examination in public by the planning inspectorate, during all of which the inclusion, exclusion or reduction of the controversial urban extension at Leckhampton will be a major issue.

It would be quite wrong and against the instructions of the National Planning Policy Framework for this process to be plan-led and empowering of local communities to pre-judge the outcome of the remaining stages of the JCS process by restricting the protection of the Leckhampton Fields and conceding the inclusion of the urban extension at Leckhampton.

### **3. Designation is consistent with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan as described in the concept drafted by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council**

Some 600 Neighbourhood Plans are being brought forward in communities nationwide but the concept plan published by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council in May 2013 represents the only emerging Neighbourhood Plan in the Cheltenham area.

Neighbourhood planning is a key part of the government's planning reforms and was introduced through the [Localism Act 2011](#), the legislation coming into effect in April 2012. The intent was to hand power down not just to large district councils but also to smaller communities and neighbourhoods and would make the views of local communities material to planning decisions, for instance over 'where new homes and offices should be built' (DCLG website).

Paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework says that 'Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need'. Neighbourhood plans must be in conformity with the JCS and so if the JCS does include large-scale development in a particular location, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot overturn that. But an emerging Neighbourhood Plan should obviously influence the emerging JCS. The first core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 17) is that 'Planning should be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area'.

Planning processes – including this one - should therefore give weight to emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

The concept plan published by the Parish Council in May 2013 is of exceptionally high quality with detailed attention to many aspects of the site of the application which is part of the area which the Concept Plan argues should be protected through Local Green Space designation. The Parish Council document includes in detail:

- Residents' views, including opposition to development plans running at 90%+ in local consultation events

- The history of Leckhampton, including the history of 'open' or common meadows and fields in the area of the application site
- The exceptionally rich local ecology, wildlife and habitats. Local wildlife includes five varieties of bat (including two priority species: the noctule and soprano pipistrelle), willow warblers, blue tits, cuckoos, yellowhammers, starlings, adders, grass snakes, hedgehogs and badgers. The concept plan highlights their importance of the traditional hedgerows and orchards in the context of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Sustainability including highlighting issues raised in the JCS Sustainability Analysis
- Traffic congestion and poor air quality
- Flood risk
- Landscape and visual impact
- Agricultural uses and value
- The area's connection to the nearby urban population

This must be one of the best researched concept plans for a Neighbourhood Plan anywhere in the country. It would be against the whole direction of new national planning policy if it was pre-empted by granting this application.

#### **4. Designation is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework**

LGS designation is included in the National Planning Policy Framework. It is the basis of many ministerial statements that the government has produced a tool that 'local communities can use to protect open places they value' (Prime Minister to Dame Fiona Reynolds of the National Trust, 21 September 2011):

**76. Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.**

Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

**77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:**

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is 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
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

*National Planning Policy Framework pp. 19-20*

- It is demonstrably special to the local community, having led to the creation of its own pressure group and generated many thousands of petition signatures, letters, emails and individual attendances at meetings over several decades and is the subject of the LGS application in the Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan concept plan.
- It holds significance, for its unkempt rural charm, its animals so close to where children can go to 'see the pigs', its history, recreational value, tranquillity and the richness of its wildlife as detailed in innumerable submissions and consultation responses by thousands of local residents over the years.
- It is very local in character (as inspectors have noted) and not an extensive tract of land.

The original **JCS Sustainability Analysis** p112 concluded that the broad location south of Cheltenham, including Leckhampton, enjoyed:

- 'Sites of biodiversity value' (RED)
- 'Development of the site would be likely to lead to the fragmentation of important habitats' (RED)
- 'The area displays a good mosaic of habitat types which could make mitigation difficult' (RED)
- For overall biodiversity impact, the site shows 'intimate rolling landscape, predominantly pastoral with improved and semi-improved pasture. Good hedgerow condition and good proportion of orchard ... good number of parkland trees and many veteran oaks along with other species. Small pockets of woodland dotted around the site. Area around Leckhampton displays unusual land use pattern with many smallholdings, orchards and allotment/market gardens. Good brookline and associated tree cover.' (RED)

Inspectors have repeatedly rejected appeals by developers, citing the rural character of the land:

- **In 1993** Inspector Brian Dodds ruled that **'the land at Leckhampton should be protected for its special historical, landscape and amenity value. It represents the last example of the gradual transition between the urban area and the countryside which characterised the Regency town.** It should be considered anew for green belt or AONB status, for 'landscape conservation area' status, and as part of a Leckhampton Conservation Area (35A, 129W).
- **In 2003** Inspector Mary Travers, conducting an enquiry on Leckhampton development reported that:

"2.25.11 The site consists of four fields subdivided by substantial hedgerows that are interspersed with hedgerow trees. It has a gently rolling, topography and an attractive pastoral character that in my view links strongly into the landscape of the AONB immediately to the south of Leckhampton Lane. Generally the contours fall from south to north and from east to west and there is a distinct ridge running roughly northwest-southeast through the site- so that the south-eastern corner is the most elevated part. A public footpath that traverses the northern part of the site forms a link in a network of rural paths to the east and west of the site.

"2.25.12 As can be observed from public vantage points, the site is highly visible from within the AONB, for example from the lower slopes of Leckhampton Hill and from higher up at the Devil's Chimney. It is also visible partly from the west and in long distance views from the north. There is a substantial hedgerow on the western boundary with the Green Belt but this area drops away towards the Vale of Gloucester As a result, development on the more



elevated south-eastern part of the site would be very conspicuous from the western approach along Leckhampton Lane where it would be seen within the context of the AONB. And looking southwards from the public footpath across the site **it is apparent that development would entail a significant intrusion into views of the open countryside and the AONB from the existing edge of the built-up area. It would also sever the link between the rural footpaths to the east and west of the site and replace it with one of an entirely different character. For these reasons and taking into account the scale of the proposed development, I consider that its visual impact on the surrounding countryside would be very significant and that it could not be easily mitigated."**

- **In 2005, Inspector David Asher was looking into the Cheltenham Local Plan, and concluded "that the development of the objection site would materially harm the rural character and appearance of the area, and the important contribution that this makes to the landscape within the site and when seen from the AONB."**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This key government document is often quoted selectively by developers and others as if it was a developer's charter. It is not.

The key element of the NPPF is often cited as the presumption in favour of sustainable development. But the presumption in favour of *development* was already there in planning law and policy. What the NPPF added, very significantly, was the element of **sustainability**.

The Department of Communities and Local Government itself has made clear:

'The presumption is not a green light for development. All proposals will need to demonstrate their sustainability and be in line with the strict protections in the draft Framework. Strong environmental safeguards remain as part of the planning system, including protecting communities and the environment from unacceptable proposals. **The presumption is principally about good plan making. Once a Local Plan is put in place, local decisions should be made in line with it.'**

*DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework: Myth-Buster, 8 September 2011*

A key theme of the NPPF is the empowerment of local communities and neighbourhoods (see the ministerial foreword, paragraph 1, the first core planning principle at paragraph 17 and many other paragraphs throughout the NPPF).

Paragraph 155 gives particular weight to consultation with neighbourhoods – by which it means local neighbourhoods roughly equivalent to parishes:

**"Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made."**

The original reasons for the area's protection in the Cheltenham Local Plan are also supported by the NPPF. Four of the core planning principles set out in the NPPF right next to the one about meeting development needs, state that councils should:

- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, **recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside** and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- contribute to **conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value**, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
- encourage the effective use of land by **reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)**, provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, **recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);'**

Paragraph 74 says that 'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- 'an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.'

Paragraphs 109 to 125 detail at length the requirements to protect the natural environment including:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph 109)
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services (109)
- Providing net gains in biodiversity (109)
- Preventing new developments from contributing to unacceptable levels of air pollution (109)
- Minimising effects on the natural environment (110)
- Encouraging the use of brownfield land (111)
- Protecting biodiversity, wildlife and landscape value (113, 114, 117, 118)
- Reducing physical pollution (120, 124)
- Reducing light pollution (125)

All of these can be cited in support of Local Green Space designation at Leckhampton.

**Martin Horwood MP**

January 2015

