

## **Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council**

### **Public Consultation on the Protection of Local Green Space in South Cheltenham**

This report describes the findings of the public consultation conducted by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council (LWWH PC) from 14 to 24 January 2015 concerning the updated proposal for a Local Green Space (LGS) on the Leckhampton Fields.

#### **1. Background**

The Leckhampton Fields lie mainly in Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWWH) Parish in Cheltenham Borough but partly also in Shurdington Parish, which is in Tewkesbury Borough. The two parish councils have co-operated on the LGS application.

The application was originally submitted by the two parish councils to Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) in August 2013 as part of a neighbourhood plan (NP) concept for the area. Together with the NP Concept, it was accepted as an input to the Gloucester-Cheltenham-Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS). The LGS will be an issue for the Examination in Public (EiP) of the draft JCS in May 2015 and this report forms part of the evidence for the JCS EiP.

In the original LGS application all parts of the Leckhampton Fields were included in the proposed LGS. This was based on the argument that all of the area merited inclusion for its landscape and amenity value and for its importance to the AONB and to the nationally significant views from Leckhampton Hill. Preservation of all of the area for its amenity and landscape value had been strongly recommended by the Planning Inspectorate following an inspection in 1993 and also strongly recommended in 2003 following a study by landscape consultants for Cheltenham Borough Council. The conclusion in both cases was that the high landscape value and largely unspoiled rural character of the area were fragile and would be easily spoiled by allowing any significant development.

In September 2013, Bovis Homes and Miller Homes submitted a planning application to build up to 650 new dwellings, primary school, care home, surgery and commercial centre on part of the area included in the LGS. This application was refused by Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee in July 2014 and is subject to an appeal due to be heard in September 2015.

In August 2014, Redrow submitted a planning application to Tewkesbury Borough Council to build 376 dwellings on the part of the proposed LGS that lies in Shurdington Parish. The site, known generally as White Cross Green or by its outdated planning designation of SD2, was identified by the JCS Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design report in 2012 as land of high landscape significance. The JCS report recommended that there should be no development on the site or at most that development should be confined to only one of the four fields. However, the Redrow application (14/00838/FUL) has proposed building on the whole area of the site. The application is expected to go to the TBC Planning Committee later in 2015.

Despite the rejection of the Bovis-Miller planning application by Cheltenham Borough Council, the Leckhampton Fields were included as a strategic development site in the draft Gloucester-Cheltenham-Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) that was submitted

by the three councils in November 2014. This inclusion is subject to the forthcoming JCS Examination in Public. If the Examination upholds the designation then at least 450 new dwellings must be accommodated on the land as this is the minimum number for a strategic development site.

## **2. Revisions to the proposed Local Green Space**

The original LGS proposal included all of the Leckhampton Fields, but in the NP Concept the councils actually examined four options, three of which (options 2, 3 and 4) included some development on the parts of the Leckhampton Fields bordering the A46. Part of the reason for rejecting these three options was the evidence that they would not be sustainable. Whether or not any development on the Leckhampton Fields can be sustainable depends particularly on whether a solution can be found to the problem of traffic congestion in south Cheltenham and to the risk that, taking into account predicted general traffic increases, development on the Leckhampton Fields would cause the fragile traffic system to collapse in the morning peak traffic period. As part of its neighbourhood planning, LWWH PC carried out traffic surveys of the morning peak traffic queue and congestion over a total of 35 days in 2012 and 2013. With professional advice from a traffic consultant, the data was used to construct a traffic model to investigate the implications of various development scenarios. The Parish Council also engaged in discussions with a consortium of developers over various options for development on the Leckhampton Fields.

In October 2014, Cheltenham Borough Council initiated a study through Gloucester Rural Community Council (GRCC) to look at all of the potential LGS areas in the Cheltenham Borough as part of the development of the new Cheltenham Plan. In the context of this study, and in light of the JCS designation of the Leckhampton Fields as a strategic development site, LWWH and Shurdington parish councils considered whether, ignoring the issues of sustainability, any areas might be taken out of the proposed LGS. A revised LGS was put forward based on the following changes:

1. To exclude the fields at Brizen Farm as these had been designated as green belt.
2. To adopt option 3 of the four considered in the NP Concept. This excludes from the LGS most of the fields adjacent to the A46, referred to as 'the Northern Fields'. It preserves the smallholdings immediately north of the public footpath and the smallholdings south of the footpath. The Northern Fields have public access only on the footpath and vehicle track and they are sufficiently far from the Leckhampton Hill that appropriate development could be acceptable.
3. To remove from the LGS the area of orchards and nurseries east of Kidnappers Lane because this area is not accessible to the public and, although it is close to the AONB, it is quite well screened by hedgerows and trees round the perimeter and within the site and by a row of tall poplars in Kidnapper Lane. Careful sympathetic development that retains and increases the screening and trees and is in keeping with the semi-rural setting could be acceptable.
4. To remove from the LGS most of the White Cross Green area because, although the 2012 JCS 'Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design' report recommended that this area should be preserved for its high landscape sensitivity, TBC would have great difficulty in resisting development on this site as Tewkesbury does not have a valid local plan or a sufficient 5 year land supply.

The rationale and analysis underlying these changes and the reasons for retaining the rest of the land within the LGS formed part of the submission on 26 January 2015 to CBC and TBC through GRCC. This is attached at Appendix 1 including a map of the revised LGS.

### **3. Public consultation**

LWWH PC decided at its public meeting on 9 January 2015 that it should undertake a full public consultation on the revised LGS proposal. The consultation was done through a public meeting held on 14 January 2015 and by distributing a leaflet with questionnaire to local residents living within 15 minutes walk of the Leckhampton Fields.

The public consultation leaflet asked seven questions. Questions 1 to 4 were multiple-choice and their purpose was to find out:

1. How many local people use the Leckhampton Fields and how often
2. In what ways people use the Fields
3. Which areas and footpaths people particularly use
4. What people most value about the Leckhampton Fields

Questions 5 to 7 asked local people to say in their own words:

5. How important the Leckhampton Fields are to them and why
6. How important the views of Leckhampton Hill are to residents and to Cheltenham
7. How much local people believe the views would be damaged if development came closer to the Hill.

The consultation also asked residents to comment on the suggested revisions to the LGS, either in support or disagreement, and to identify if there were any other areas still included in the proposed LGS that they believed could be removed.

The Council distributed about 4600 leaflets covering 80-90% of homes within 0.7 miles (15 minutes walk) of the Leckhampton Fields. Shortage of time and of leaflets meant that some roads to the north in the area of The Park were omitted. This omission was unfortunate, but it is only likely to have affected the analysis in Table 6.

Because of the deadline to submit the revised LGS application and evidence to CBC by 26 January, the time available for the consultation was very short and some residents had as little as two days to respond. Of the 4600 forms distributed, a total of 762 were returned by the 24 January closing date and submitted to GRCC on 26 January together with a preliminary analysis. Collection of further forms ceased on 26 January, but 19 forms that were in the mail and received by 28 January have been included in the more detailed analysis presented in this report, making a total of 781 forms.

In total, 736 households responded to the consultation by 28 January; the number of respondents included in the analysis was 1510. This is a 16% return rate, which is fairly reasonable given the very short time people were given to respond. As discussed below, the analysis suggests that most of the local residents who regularly use the Leckhampton Fields did reply to the consultation.

The majority of forms were returned by an individual resident or by a couple. Some forms included other adults in the household and some included children. Two forms contained returns from more than one household and one form was returned by a local walking group. The distribution is shown in Table 1 below.

	Forms from one household or less (some households returned separate forms for each adult)							Forms with more than one household		Walking group	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	3+2+2	4+4		
Respondents per form	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	3+2+2	4+4	14	
Number of forms	280	386	45	47	15	4	1	1	1	1	781
Number of respondents	280	772	135	188	75	24	7	7	8	14	1510

Table 1: Questionnaires returned and number of respondents

#### 4. Multiple-choice questions (questions 1 to 4)

The initial analysis submitted to GRCC used the raw responses to the multiple-choice questions 1 to 4. The responses on each form were simply multiplied by the number of respondents on the form. This raw analysis is shown in Table 2. The column headed 1510 includes all of the respondents. The column headed 1407 limits the number of respondents to 3 per form as a rough-and-ready way to reduce the effect of including children in the response. This is on the assumption that a third member of a household may well be adult but that further members are more likely to be younger children.

In the more detailed analysis described in this report, weightings have been applied based on the assumptions that:

- a) For forms with more than one respondent, the stated usage is likely to reflect the respondent who uses the field most often and the average across all of the respondents on the form is likely to be less. For example, one person in the household may walk the dog daily but other members may join in less often. On the other hand, in a household where the main respondent uses the fields only occasionally, the other members of the household may also be occasional users. The actual weightings are shown in Table 3. For the principal or sole respondent on the form, it has been assumed that 'daily or more often' equates to 320 times a year, 'almost daily' to 210 times a year, 'few times a week' to 105 times a year, 'many times per month' to 60 times a year, 'few times a month' to 25 times a year, and 'occasionally' to 12 times a year.
- b) The four activities of walking, dog walking, jogging and playing are likely to be separate activities. If more than one of these activities has been ticked, the stated usage is distributed across the ticked activities, taking account of double ticks.
- c) In estimating how much each area of the Leckhampton Fields is used, one should allow for how many areas an individual respondent uses each time. If an area is double ticked it suggests other areas are used less often. Ticking 'circular walks' makes it more likely many or most fields/paths ticked are used each time.

Number of responses counted		1510		1407		1510	1407
1 tick = important; 2 ticks = very important		1 tick	2 ticks	1 tick	2 ticks	1 + 2 ticks combined	
Question 1: How often do you use the fields / paths?	Daily or more	25		22		2%	2%
	Almost daily	367		334		24%	24%
	Few times per week	306		276		20%	20%
	Many times per month	299		280		20%	20%
	Few times per month	264		256		17%	18%
	Occasionally	217		208		14%	15%
Question 2: How do you use the fields? (Please tick all that apply; double tick if particularly important to you).	Walking	1012	284	945	265	86%	87%
	Dog walking	382	146	349	133	35%	35%
	Running / jogging	309	42	270	37	23%	22%
	Playing games	210	7	174	7	14%	13%
	With children	550	131	493	117	45%	44%
	Relaxing	627	88	577	82	47%	47%
	Other	279		259		18%	19%
Question 3: What areas / paths do you particularly use? (Tick / double tick all that apply).	Lotts Meadow	811	252	759	220	70%	70%
	KL/FL/CR triangle	1016	255	949	229	84%	85%
	White Cross Green	495	136	448	129	42%	42%
	Moorend Stream Path	755	149	685	135	60%	59%
	Path in smallholdings	724	119	652	114	56%	55%
	Robinswood	539	74	490	68	41%	40%
	Circular walks	715	80	654	72	53%	52%
Question 4: What do you most value? (Please tick all that apply; double tick any particularly important to you)	Opportunity for exercise	813	456	764	411	84%	85%
	Views of Leckhampton Hill	855	491	810	442	89%	90%
	Views across the fields	860	411	807	371	84%	85%
	Wildflowers	789	167	727	153	63%	63%
	Trees	926	211	854	195	75%	76%
	Orchards	571	65	516	57	42%	41%
	Hedgerows	868	184	794	176	70%	70%
	Rural atmosphere	942	379	884	342	87%	88%
	Variety	573	61	521	54	42%	41%
	Tranquillity	858	308	804	280	77%	78%
	Farm animals	739	161	690	139	60%	60%
	Horses	479	76	451	56	37%	37%
	Birds	836	200	775	192	69%	70%
	Wild animals	706	173	646	158	58%	58%
	Old nurseries	348	27	307	23	25%	24%
	Smallholdings	465	77	429	65	36%	36%
	Network of footpaths	855	325	796	293	78%	78%
	Circular walks	631	161	582	151	52%	53%
	Medieval moat	459	64	415	62	35%	34%
	Ponds	497	59	448	56	37%	36%
Streams	690	153	638	134	56%	56%	
Medieval cottages	494	101	455	91	39%	39%	
Wilderness areas	620	158	560	143	52%	51%	

Table 2: Raw data for question 1 to 4 (1 tick = important; 2 ticks = particularly important)

1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> respondent	Times per year the Fields are assumed to be used by each respondent in a household when first respondent uses the Leckhampton Fields -					
	daily or more	almost daily	few times per week	Many times per month	few times per month	only occasionally
1 <sup>st</sup>	320	210	105	60	25	12.0
2 <sup>nd</sup>	166	110	54	32	16.9	10.4
3 <sup>rd</sup>	105	76	39	24	13.9	9.9
4 <sup>th</sup>	68	54	30	18.6	12.0	9.5
5 <sup>th</sup>		40	24	15.1	10.6	9.3
6 <sup>th</sup>		29	18.9	12.5	9.5	9.1

Table 3: Assumed usage (days per annum) for successive respondents on a form.

From Table 3 and assumptions b) and c) above, Table 4 shows the estimated number of people per day that on average are engaged in each type of activity on the Fields. It can be seen that the estimates are fairly insensitive to how the double ticks are weighted. The table also shows the effect of limiting the number of respondents to 3 per form or 3 per household in the cases where more than one household has responded on the same form. The results are very similar, showing that including large households does not materially affect the analysis.

	Walking	Dog walking	Running / jogging	Playing games	With children	Relaxing
All respondents double tick weight = 1	130	105	29	16	70	81
All respondents double tick weight = 2	132	107	27	14	75	84
All respondents double tick weight = 3	133	108	26	14	80	87
Maximum 3 per household/form double tick weight = 2	129	104	25	13	72	82

Table 4: How people use the Leckhampton Fields (questionnaire question 2)

The questionnaire also asked people to say if there were other ways they use the fields that have not been included in the multiple-choice options. The responses on this are summarised in Table 5 below. One notable 'other use' identified is for outdoor activities by the Bethesda Scout Group. The Group has over 100 young people. Its meeting place in Great Norwood Street has no land for outdoor activities. Leckhampton Fields are in walking distance and used by the Group regularly all the year round.

Other ways the Leckhampton Fields are used	Number of respondents / users	Number of forms
Birdwatching, watching wildlife	68	42
Children's nature walks and education about nature	16	7
Bethesda scout group (100 young people regularly)	about 100	1
Picking blackberries, sloes, damsons, gathering manure	59	31
Cycling including safe cycling with children	14	9
Family life, adventure, exploring, picnics and other activities	22	8
Meeting and making friends, other social activities	10	7
Flying kites and remotely controlled planes/helicopters	7	3
Looking at the views from the road, wheel-chair access to views	4	2
As a safe route to allotments and other locations	25	15
Working on field, tending livestock, horses	14	6
Drawing, painting, photography	24	12
Enjoying the views, fresh air, open space	23	16
Reflecting, meditation, prayer, recharging	15	7

Table 5 – Other ways respondents say they use the Leckhampton Fields

Table 6 below shows the weighted estimates for how many people use each part of the Leckhampton Fields each day averaged over the year. In the case of Lotts Meadow one can compare this calculated usage with a survey of the actual usage conducted over the period of a week in June 2011. The survey results are shown in Table 7. The weather conditions during this survey were recorded as being 'relatively cool with patchy sunshine, light winds, clouds and a few light showers'. So the results should be reasonably representative of the usage for the summer months.

The survey average of 162 people per day in June 2011 is reasonably consistent with the estimates for Lotts Meadow of 122 – 135 in Table 6. One would expect the average over the whole year to be lower than for June because of the shorter hours of daylight in the winter months and also because Lotts Meadow can be quite waterlogged in winter. This agreement gives reasonable confidence that the estimates in Table 6 for other parts of the Leckhampton Fields are also broadly correct.

Double tick weighted by a factor of	Lotts Meadow	Church Rd / Farm Lane / Kidnappers Lane triangle	White Cross Green	Moorend Stream Path (A46 to Lotts Meadow)	Small-holding paths	Robins-wood Field and paths	Circular Walks
Unweighted	122	150	54	100	103	74	102
1.5	126	152	57	99	102	72	98
2.0	130	154	59	98	101	70	95
3.0	135	157	62	96	99	67	89

Table 6: Estimated number of people using each part of the Leckhampton Fields per day averaged over the year.

	Date	From	To	Hrs	Dog walkers	Other users	Both	Av/hr
Mon	20-Jun-11	06:30	09:00	2.5	16	6	22	8.8
Wed	15-Jun-11	09:00	11:00	2	23	10	33	16.5
Tue	14-Jun-11	11:00	13:00	2	8	1	9	4.5
Mon	13-Jun-11	13:00	15:00	2	9	3	12	6.0
Mon	17-Jun-11	15:00	17:00	2	12	1	13	6.5
Tues	14-Jun-11	17:00	19:00	2	17	15	32	16.0
<i>Weekday (*)</i>		<i>19:00</i>	<i>21:00</i>	<i>2</i>			<i>19</i>	<i>9.5</i>
TOTAL .							140	
Sun	19-Jun-11	06:30	09:00	2.5	9	5	14	5.6
Sat	11-Jun-11	09:00	11:00	2	23	11	34	17
Sat	18-Jun-11	11:00	13:00	2	22	2	24	12
Sun	19-Jun-11	13:00	15:00	2	12	26	38	19
Sat	18-Jun-11	15:00	17:00	2	18	10	28	14
Sun	19-Jun-11	17:00	19:00	2	32	18	50	25
<i>Weekend (*)</i>		<i>19:00</i>	<i>21:00</i>	<i>2</i>			<i>30</i>	<i>15</i>
TOTAL .							225	
<b>Average number of people using Lotts Meadow per day</b>							<b>162</b>	

Table 7: Number of people observed using Lotts Meadow in survey conducted from 13 to 20 June 2011. (\*) The survey did not cover the evening period from 19:00 to dark, when in summer a lot of people walk in Lotts Meadow after dinner. The figures assumed for 19:00 to 21:00 are based on the average over the day.

Double tick weighted by a factor of	Lotts Meadow	Church Rd / Farm Lane / Kidnappers Lane triangle	White Cross Green	Moorend Stream Path (A46 to Lotts Meadow)	Small-holding paths	Robins-wood Field and paths	Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk
Raw data	84%	100%	50%	71%	66%	48%	63%
Weight = 1	82%	100%	36%	67%	69%	50%	68%
Weight = 1.5	83%	100%	37%	65%	67%	47%	65%
Weight = 2.0	84%	100%	38%	64%	65%	46%	62%
Weight = 3.0	86%	100%	39%	61%	63%	43%	57%

Table 8: Estimated number using each area normalised as a percentage of the usage of the Central Fields (Church Rd, Farm Lane, Kidnappers Lane triangle).



Table 8 above shows the estimated usage of each part of the fields as a percentage of the usage of the central fields (the fields in the triangle bounded by Church Road, Farm Land and Kidnappers Lane). The central fields have the highest usage followed by Lotts Meadow. Surprisingly, there is little difference between the weighted data and the raw data. The exception is White Cross Green where the weighted analysis gives a significantly lower usage. This is mainly because many of the respondents who give White Cross Green two ticks are only occasional users (including walkers using the Cheltenham Circular Path).

Tables 9 to 11 show how the distance people live away from the Fields affects how often they use the Fields and for what purposes. As would be expected, those people who use the Fields 'daily or more often' live mostly within 6 minutes walk. Those people who use the Fields 'almost daily' live within about 12 minutes walk. Conversely, those who live more than 2 miles away tend to use the Fields only several times a month or less. The distance in Tables 9 to 11 is measured along the access route and the time shown is how long it takes to walk to the nearest entry point at 3 mph, which is a realistic pace on pavements. Table 11 shows the total usage for the various activities. For residents who live close to the Fields, walking considerably exceeds dog walking. About 84% of walkers are coming from within half a mile or 10 minutes walk. Dog walkers are prepared to come from further away, some coming from a mile or more. For people coming from 10 minutes away or further, dog walkers outnumber walkers.

Distance respondents live from the Fields		Number of forms from this distance	Number of households from this distance	Number of respondents at this distance	Number of respondents using Fields -						
Miles from access point	Minutes to walk there at 3 mph				Zero or not stated	Daily or more	Almost daily	Few times per week	Many times per month	Few times per month	Occasionally
0 to 0.1	0 to 2	75	67	126	4	1	30	40	22	18	11
0.1 to 0.2	2 to 4	155	141	317	4	7	105	65	63	41	32
0.2 to 0.3	3 to 6	133	126	265	5	13	80	56	57	28	26
0.3 to 0.4	6 to 8	110	106	193	5	4	52	38	35	39	20
0.4 to 0.5	8 to 10	110	108	220	0	0	34	47	52	56	31
0.5 to 0.6	10 to 12	57	55	118	5	0	42	14	23	21	13
0.6 to 0.7	12 to 14	46	45	85	0	0	11	11	18	25	20
0.7 to 0.8	14 to 16	30	30	58	0	0	6	19	11	8	14
0.8 to 1.0	16 to 20	13	12	25	1	0	0	4	0	11	14
1 to 1.5	20 to 30	19	16	37	4	0	6	4	9	7	6
1.5 to 2	30 to 40	10	9	23	2	0	0	4	0	0	17
> 2 miles	> 40 mins	23	21	44	0	0	1	4	11	10	17
All distances		781	736	1511	30	25	367	306	301	264	221

Table 9: How the frequency of using the Leckhampton Fields depends on how far away people live from the nearest access point.

Distance respondents live from the Fields		Number of response forms from this distance	Number of households from this distance	Number of respondents at this distance	Days per month (per respondent)					
Miles from access point	Minutes to walk there at 3 mph				Walking	Dog Walking	Running/Jogging	Playing games	With children	Relaxing
0 to 0.1	0 to 2	75	67	126	3.5	2.1	0.6	0.5	2.0	2.0
0.1 to 0.2	2 to 4	155	141	317	3.9	2.2	0.6	0.4	2.2	2.4
0.2 to 0.3	3 to 6	133	126	265	2.7	2.9	0.8	0.4	1.9	1.8
0.3 to 0.4	6 to 8	110	106	193	3.0	2.3	0.5	0.3	1.3	2.1
0.4 to 0.5	8 to 10	110	108	220	2.0	1.8	0.4	0.1	0.9	1.3
0.5 to 0.6	10 to 12	57	55	118	2.2	2.9	0.6	0.2	1.5	1.3
0.6 to 0.7	12 to 14	46	45	85	1.9	1.5	0.4	0.2	1.0	1.5
0.7 to 0.8	14 to 16	30	30	58	1.5	2.4	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.9
0.8 to 1.0	16 to 20	12	11	25	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.3	1.0
1 to 1.5	20 to 30	19	16	36	1.3	1.3	0.5	0.4	1.3	0.5
1.5 to 2	30 to 40	10	9	23	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.5
> 2 miles	> 40 mins	24	22	44	1.1	1.1	0.4	0.0	0.9	0.4

Table 10: How people use the Leckhampton Fields depending on how far away they live from the nearest access point.

Distance respondents live from the Fields		Number of households from this distance	Number of respondents from this distance	Days per month - all respondents					
Miles from access point	Minutes to walk there at 3 mph			Walking	Dog walking	Running / jogging	Playing games	With children	Relaxing
0 to 0.1	0 to 2	67	126	428	256	76	61	243	247
0.1 to 0.2	2 to 4	141	317	1207	679	177	118	694	739
0.2 to 0.3	4 to 6	126	265	706	760	210	100	494	481
0.3 to 0.4	6 to 8	106	193	586	438	94	58	255	400
0.4 to 0.5	8 to 10	108	220	447	391	98	32	196	292
0.5 to 0.6	10 to 12	55	118	257	338	68	28	176	150
0.6 to 0.7	12 to 14	45	85	160	125	32	16	83	126
0.7 to 0.8	14 to 16	30	58	88	138	24	7	40	53
0.8 to 1	16 to 20	10	20	22	16	8	0	0	21
1 to 1.5	20 to 30	17	37	48	50	19	13	48	19
1.5 to 2	30 to 40	9	23	23	6	2	4	14	11
> 2 miles	> 40 mins	22	44	48	50	16	2	40	19
All distances		736	1506	4021	3247	825	439	2282	2558

Table 11: How the total usage by all respondents depends on distance from the Fields

Table 12 below shows that people use the Leckhampton Fields from all directions. The main routes and access points to the Fields are:

- A From West via A46, Brizen Farm footpath, Lanes Estate, Farm Lane
- B From West / Northwest via A46 and the smallholding access track from A46
- C From North / Northwest via A46 and the Moorend Stream footpath
- D From North / Northeast via roads to Merlin Way or via Burrows Field
- E From East via Church Road and allotment footpath to Lotts Meadow or Cheltenham Circular Path to the central fields
- F From South via Kidnappers Lane and Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk
- G From South / Southwest via Farm Lane and Cheltenham Circular Path

The total from the North/NW (column C) is artificially low because, as noted earlier, a shortage of leaflets meant that a number of roads in this direction were not covered in the consultation. The totals in columns F and G are low because there are few houses in the AONB to the south. There are relatively few responses from further away than 0.7 miles because consultation leaflets were not delivered beyond this range.

Distance respondents live from an access point to the Leckhampton Field		Number of households from this distance	Number of respondents at this distance	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Miles from access point	Minutes to walk there at 3 mph			WEST	WEST / NW	NORTH / NW	NORTH / NE	EAST / SE	SOUTH	SOUTH / SW
0 to 0.1	0 to 2	67	126	32	1	3	24	0	4	3
0.1 to 0.2	2 to 4	141	317	59	1	16	21	17	18	9
0.2 to 0.3	4 to 6	126	265	6	20	0	29	59	5	7
0.3 to 0.4	6 to 8	106	193	4	10	16	57	18	0	1
0.4 to 0.5	8 to 10	108	220	16	23	10	41	18	0	0
0.5 to 0.6	10 to 12	55	118	0	15	0	18	22	0	0
0.6 to 0.7	12 to 14	45	85	0	9	0	17	19	0	0
0.7 to 0.8	14 to 16	30	58	0	7	1	0	22	0	0
0.8 to 1	16 to 20	10	25	3	4	0	1	3	0	0
1 to 1.5	20 to 30	17	36	10	0	1	1	4	0	0
1.5 to 2	30 to 40	9	23	1	2	2	1	3	0	0
TOTAL (< 2 miles)		714	1466	131	92	49	210	185	27	20
> 2 miles	> 40 mins	22	44							

Table 12: Access routes to the Leckhampton Fields and number of respondents using each route.

In multiple choice question 4, the consultation asked people to say what features of the Leckhampton Fields they particularly value. Table 13 below summarises the responses. Double ticks have been given a weighting of 2 and single ticks a weighting of 1. The

column marked 'Raw data' treats all respondents as equal and takes no account of how much they use the Field or of their household size. The columns marked 'Weighted' are for the weighing factors in Table 3. The score for each aspect is shown normalised against the weighted score for 'Views of Leckhampton', which is the feature that people value most. The figures in the right hand column show how features are ordered in terms of how much they are valued. The table also gives an analysis depending on how far respondents live away from the Leckhampton Fields.

Distance from Fields (miles)	Weighted		Raw data		Depending on how far away people live (weighted)							
	All		All		0-0.2		0.2-0.4		0.4-0.7		>0.7	
Views of Leckhampton Hill	100%	1	106%	1	103%	1	103%	1	95%	1	75%	4
Rural atmosphere	95%	2	98%	3	92%	3	100%	2	91%	3	84%	2
Views across the fields	92%	3	98%	4	96%	2	91%	3	91%	2	74%	6
Network of footpaths	87%	4	87%	5	86%	4	90%	4	84%	6	85%	1
Tranquillity	82%	5	85%	6	83%	5	76%	7	86%	5	80%	3
Trees	78%	6	78%	7	74%	7	81%	5	79%	7	71%	8
Opportunity for exercise	74%	7	100%	2	77%	6	80%	6	87%	4	61%	12
Hedgerows	70%	8	71%	9	65%	11	73%	8	70%	9	71%	7
Birds	69%	9	72%	8	72%	9	68%	10	66%	11	67%	10
Wild animals	68%	10	61%	12	72%	10	66%	11	66%	10	53%	17
Wildflowers	65%	11	65%	10	61%	12	63%	13	70%	8	74%	5
Streams	65%	12	58%	13	59%	13	72%	9	63%	12	59%	13
Farm Animals	61%	13	61%	11	74%	8	53%	15	58%	14	49%	19
Wilderness areas	60%	14	54%	15	53%	15	63%	12	62%	13	67%	11
Circular walks	55%	15	55%	14	58%	14	53%	14	49%	16	69%	9
Orchard	44%	16	40%	16	42%	18	38%	20	50%	15	55%	16
Horses	42%	17	37%	19	45%	16	38%	21	43%	18	44%	21
Variety	42%	18	40%	17	45%	17	38%	19	40%	19	57%	14
Medieval cottages	42%	19	40%	18	38%	21	48%	16	38%	20	43%	23
Ponds	41%	20	36%	20	39%	20	46%	17	37%	21	46%	20
Smallholdings	39%	21	36%	21	41%	19	28%	22	45%	17	55%	15
Medieval moat	38%	22	34%	22	36%	22	40%	18	36%	22	44%	22
Old nurseries	27%	23	23%	23	25%	23	25%	23	29%	23	51%	18

Table 13: How much people value various features of the Leckhampton Fields based on the answers given to question 4. The scores are normalised as a percentage against the score for 'Views of Leckhampton Hill', the feature that people valued most highly.

As can be seen, when one combines the data from all respondents there is little difference between the raw data and the weighted data except in the one case of 'opportunity for exercise' which is significantly lower in the weighted analysis. How far people live away from the Fields makes little difference to what features they most value, except perhaps in the case of respondents who live more than 0.7 miles away. Table 14 shows the raw responses to question 4 grouped by how people access the Fields from their homes. Again, there is little or no significant difference between each group.

For all groups, what people value most are the views of Leckhampton Hill, the rural atmosphere, the views across the fields, the network of footpaths, the tranquillity, the opportunity for exercise, the trees, hedgerows and nature. In view of the proposal in the

revised LGS to exclude the old nurseries and most of the northern smallholdings, it is significant that in all groups the old nurseries are valued by the least number of people. The smallholdings are also fairly low on the list although more highly valued by respondents living more than 0.5 miles away. Wilderness areas, however, are more strongly rated. The main wilderness areas are the southern smallholdings, the thin strip between hedgerows east of Robinswood Field, and the three disused orchards north of Kidnappers Lane, south of Robinswood Field and east of Farm Lane. These areas are included in the proposed LGS except the orchards south of Robinswood Field and north of Kidnappers Lane. The Farm Animals are particularly valued by people living within 0.2 miles of the Fields. This may be because people see them frequently and may take their children to feed them in the case of the pig fields.

	From A46 via Brizen footpath or Kidnappers Lane	From A46 via Smallholding Path	From A46 via Moorend Stream Path	From north via Merlin Way or Burrows Field	Via Church Road via 3 routes	From Kidnappers Lane via 4 routes	Via Farm Lane (3 routes)	From Lanes Estate	From outside the local area
Views of Leckhampton Hill	1.14	1.38	1.23	1.16	1.17	1.29	1.45	1.30	1.02
Rural atmosphere	1.01	1.30	1.16	1.10	1.09	1.19	1.30	1.13	0.89
Views across the fields	0.94	1.25	1.15	1.00	1.15	1.13	1.43	1.22	0.80
Network of footpaths	0.95	1.14	1.02	0.93	0.97	1.02	1.03	1.09	0.89
Tranquillity	0.89	1.19	1.05	0.89	0.97	1.04	0.95	1.02	0.80
Trees	0.82	1.08	0.87	0.82	0.89	0.69	0.95	1.01	0.73
Opportunity for exercise	1.18	1.35	1.03	1.08	1.09	1.25	1.40	1.22	0.91
Hedgerows	0.86	0.91	0.71	0.83	0.79	0.77	0.88	0.84	0.66
Birds	0.82	1.01	0.80	0.82	0.74	0.87	0.80	0.81	0.86
Wild animals	0.83	0.88	0.65	0.67	0.60	0.79	0.85	0.73	0.55
Wildflowers	0.69	0.93	0.67	0.71	0.74	0.81	0.55	0.74	0.73
Streams	0.64	0.81	0.66	0.60	0.71	0.65	0.63	0.59	0.64
Farm Animals	0.64	0.83	0.58	0.69	0.67	0.60	0.65	0.84	0.55
Wilderness areas	0.76	0.85	0.59	0.56	0.59	0.60	0.60	0.59	0.57
Circular walks	0.85	0.80	0.48	0.57	0.54	0.83	0.58	0.75	0.45
Orchards	0.45	0.57	0.38	0.39	0.52	0.46	0.48	0.46	0.50
Horses	0.33	0.51	0.26	0.38	0.46	0.48	0.55	0.43	0.30
Variety	0.46	0.55	0.43	0.47	0.43	0.44	0.30	0.47	0.45
Medieval cottages	0.43	0.67	0.39	0.42	0.45	0.52	0.40	0.46	0.36
Ponds	0.45	0.67	0.27	0.35	0.38	0.52	0.45	0.38	0.34
Smallholdings	0.39	0.42	0.26	0.39	0.49	0.37	0.35	0.37	0.43
Medieval moat	0.44	0.49	0.40	0.38	0.39	0.42	0.30	0.32	0.34
Old nurseries	0.29	0.35	0.13	0.31	0.22	0.31	0.15	0.27	0.27
Total	16.25	19.94	15.15	15.53	16.07	17.04	17.00	17.03	14.02

Table 14: How the raw responses to question 4 vary depending on where respondents live and their nearest access to the Leckhampton Fields. The number in each box is the average number of ticks per respondent.

Question 4 also asked respondents to identify any other features of the Fields that they particularly value. All of the responses overlapped responses to question 5 and have been included in section 5 below.

## **5. Importance of Leckhampton Fields to local people**

Question 5 asked people to say how important the Leckhampton Fields are to them and why. Many respondents explained why the Leckhampton Fields are important, but without explicitly saying how important or how highly valued the fields were. Only on 56% of the forms (57% of responders) did respondents give a direct answer on how important the Leckhampton Fields were to them. The 56% were scored 'unimportant' = 0, 'somewhat/fairly important' = 1, 'important/quite important' = 2, and 'very/extremely important' =3 (or equivalent wording). Overall this gave an average score of 2.84. So, most of the 56% that answered the first part of question 5 considered the Fields were very important or extremely important to them. Only one form (two respondents) said that the Fields were unimportant. These two respondents did not use the Fields and felt the priority to build more housing should override landscape or amenity considerations.

Respondents gave a very large number of reasons why the Fields are important to them. However, many of the reasons were broadly similar and the responses have been amalgamated into 96 summaries below. The number of respondents whose comments have been amalgamated into each summary is shown in brackets.

1. **Access - easy and quick (317 respondents)** It is very important having this quick easy every day access to open green space, fresh air away from traffic, and beautiful peaceful countryside; so very convenient for recreation, dog walking, exercise, relaxation, family life and just walking around after a day in the office. It is not just that the Fields are close; they are also always rewarding because of the diversity of scenery and views changing with the seasons, time of day, weather, clouds, and because of the wildlife one may see; also the rich network of paths gives many different routes to follow. All of these features make the area so special and rewarding for everyday activity and relaxation. The benefit of the Leckhampton Fields as a place for relaxation and reflection was cited by 104 respondents and 176 respondents said the Leckhampton Fields were the prime or a prime reason that they had chosen to live in the area; some said they would move elsewhere if there was major development.
2. **Access - fresh air (62 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are the "lungs of south Cheltenham" enabling residents to take in the fresh air, giving vital breathing space away from the traffic and pollution, and used by people from all directions across Cheltenham, not just by locals.
3. **Access - passers by (10 respondents)** The Fields afford daily pleasure to commuters and other passers-by who drive or cycle through the area and enjoy the scenery, views and rural atmosphere.
4. **Access - so many users (19 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are used by so many people and families, and they are a great place to take visitors
5. **Access - without a car (116 respondents)** It is a huge advantage to be able to take a walk, walk the dog, enjoy activities with children all without having to use a car (and adding to traffic, CO2 and pollution). The Fields are ideal when you do not have

- the energy, or time, or fitness to climb up Leckhampton Hill, or if you live too far away from the Hill to get there without using a car. The footpaths also provide a rural route on foot to the Hill and for longer walks in the Cotswolds, again without using a car.
6. **Access - from west of the A46 (18 respondents)** For residents living west of the A46 in Warden Hill, Hatherley and The Park, the Leckhampton Fields provide green space accessible on foot and direct access to the AONB and to Leckhampton Hill for longer walks. One respondent comments that from Hatherley Road the Leckhampton Fields are the closest and most convenient facility for jogging and as an amenity for a young family. Another respondent from the Park area says that 'the Leckhampton Fields are the main local green space where we can walk, run and walk our dog without using a car. The fields allow me to get into a green space within 15 minute walk of my home.'
  7. **Access - from other parts of Cheltenham (26 respondents)** Although the public consultation has been confined to the immediate locality, the Leckhampton Fields are also used by people from all over Cheltenham, notably Charlton Kings, Up Hatherley, west Cheltenham, Benhall, especially when they have friends or relatives in Leckhampton. The Fields are a big part of what makes Cheltenham a much loved town. One respondent says 'I live in Charlton King, but for me Lotts Meadow is possibly the most beautiful location of its kind that I have ever come across'.
  8. **Agriculture - allotments (9 respondents)** The Fields are good agricultural land, much of it grade 2. There is a big demand for allotments in Cheltenham for food and recreation. We need to preserve the smallholdings and provide more allotments.
  9. **Agriculture - farm animals (36 respondents)** People love the pigs, sheep, hens, geese, ducks in the smallholdings, and walking through the cows and sheep in the fields. Chatting to the smallholders about what they are growing is great too. Many people love getting close to the sheep and lambs on White Cross Green; also feeding the pigs and watching the piglets at the pig field on the A46 and the pig field in Farm Lane.
  10. **Agriculture - grazing animals (24 respondents)** People love the sight and sounds of animals grazing in the fields – the cows, sheep and horses. One respondent says 'I have had ponies in this area for 35 years'.
  11. **Agriculture - nurseries and smallholdings (15 respondents)** Much of the land is grade 2 and its agricultural and horticultural value should not be ignored. It was the loss of local access to market when the Cheltenham town market closed that made the Leckhampton nurseries commercially unviable. This could be reversed in the future with greater demand for local unpackaged produce.
  12. **Amenity for all (86 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields provide a wonderful and diverse amenity for year-round outdoor activities in real countryside, safe and unhindered by cars and traffic. They are used for walking, dog walking, cycling, nature rambles, running, geocaching, den-building, astronomy, orienteering, outdoor challenge, and games with children. Everyone, no matter what their income or age, can find relaxation, rest, exercise and wellbeing in this environment. One respondent comments 'The fields and footpaths provide a constant daily source of enjoyment; I never tire of them'.
  13. **Amenity for all weathers (51 respondents)** The fields and footpaths provide nice gentle walks that are delightful and accessible; the many footpaths and routes give great variety and mean one can avoid any muddy areas in wet weather.
  14. **Amenity for exercise (17 respondents)** The footpaths and fields are a great place to exercise whilst enjoying the natural environment. They are excellent for running in

- and many people use them. Two respondents comment that 'Walking and running in the area is our main leisure activity'.
15. **Amenity for less mobile residents (9 respondents)** When you are too old to do many long walks or if you are disabled, the views, footpaths and countryside of the Leckhampton Fields become even more important.
  16. **Amenity for South Cheltenham (45 respondents)** South Cheltenham has become very built up. The Leckhampton Fields are the only sizeable green space left in this area for walking, dog walking and viewing wildlife. In the interests of sustaining a reasonable quality of life and environment for current and future generations in South Cheltenham, the Leckhampton Fields need to be conserved and integrated into the future plans for the area. The Fields are extremely important to the communities on all sides.
  17. **AONB - avoiding urban sprawl (18 respondents)** The Fields are important for keeping urban sprawl sufficiently away from the AONB.
  18. **AONB - looking over the Fields (2 respondents)** We walk mainly in the AONB but the Leckhampton Field are still vital to us because of the fine views across the Fields from the AONB. They are so unique.
  19. **AONB - rural charm (5 respondents)** The special rural environment and charm of the Fields complements the AONB and Leckhampton Hill to the south, and expands the beauty of the area.
  20. **Art - drawing, painting, photography (10 respondents)** The Fields are used by many people for drawing, painting and photographing the scenery and wildlife.
  21. **Beauty of the landscape (75 respondents)** This is a very beautiful landscape with peace and tranquillity, great variety and interest, beautiful old cottages and trees. It is lovely to be in, unspoilt, refreshing, invigorates the soul, treasured by local people. It is a rural gem and should have been incorporated into the AONB. Its special beauty could easily be lost.
  22. **Character and diversity (18 respondents)** The fields give the distinct character to the area providing incredible diversity within what it a relatively small space; they are beautiful and energising.
  23. **Importance to Cheltenham (15 respondents)** The fields are very important to the character and image of Cheltenham. They are part of what makes Cheltenham a 'countryside town' so perfect for people of all ages. Without them, south Cheltenham just becomes urban sprawl.
  24. **Circular Walk and Circular Footpath (7 respondents)** The Leckhampton Field Circular Walk provides a substantial local walk that gains the full value of the area and its variety. The Leckhampton Fields are also one of the finest sections of the Cheltenham Circular Footpath. Both the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk and the Cheltenham Circular Footpath in this area must be properly preserved.
  25. **City farm (14 respondents)** Until recently, when the animal smallholdings were fully operating, they were like an 'urban farm' and such a lovely amenity. It was great to see people keeping livestock on a small scale. The delightful mix of animal and vegetable husbandry could easily be restored and enlarged by bringing back smallholders and offering them proper leases long enough to make investment worthwhile.
  26. **Cycling (13 respondents)** For cyclists the quiet rural nature of this area gives a safe and enjoyable place for a local ride and useful roads to move around this side of



- town. Cycling on the Leckhampton Fields is much safer for children than being on the roads.
27. **Dog walking - freedom (10 respondents)** Dogs can run free over the fields (Lotts Meadow and Robinswood Field).
  28. **Dog walking - meeting others (23 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are a lovely area for dog walking and for enjoying the beauty and socialising with the many other dog walkers.
  29. **Dog walking - Northern Fields / Robinswood (5 respondents)** The Northern Field footpaths, Robinswood Field and Moorend Stream path are very important for dog walking, especially for residents living to the west and also when other locations are muddy or waterlogged.
  30. **Dog walking - variety of routes (13 respondents)** The rich network of footpaths gives a good variety of different routes for walking and dog walking every day and for avoiding any muddy or waterlogged areas in wet weather. Particularly valuable for dog walking in winter when Lotts Meadow and other locations are quite wet.
  31. **Family activities (49 respondents)** The Fields provide high quality family time and wellbeing. They allow families to spend time together, exercising, exploring wildlife, climbing trees, having picnics, picking blackberries and enjoying the fresh air.
  32. **Family, friends and relatives (5 respondents)** We frequently use the area for rambling when our relatives and friends visit us
  33. **Flood prevention (17 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are important in holding flood water and protecting south Cheltenham.
  34. **Footpaths (11 respondents)** The paths with their open views across the fields are a real pleasure to walk; no traffic rushing by. The views are priceless and should not be lost.
  35. **Footpath network (34 respondents)** The network of footpaths provides lovely routes in all directions. Most paths are reasonably firm under foot even in very wet weather. As well as the diversity of walks, the footpaths also provide countryside routes to get to shops in the Bath Road and Salisbury Avenue, the supermarket, schools, doctors, from Warden Hill to Leckhampton, to the AONB and Leckhampton Hill, to the allotments by Burrows Field and to and from Crippetts Lane and the Lanes Estate. Many people enjoy using these lovely routes rather than driving.
  36. **Future generation (114 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are a very important amenity for the future. We must revere and protect this very special area for future generations, including for children who need areas to play in. The fields are fundamental to current and future residents of Leckhampton, very important to their health and fitness, and also hugely important to maintaining Leckhampton's rural village atmosphere.
  37. **Health - antidote to stress (41 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields give a sense of freedom; they are a place to unwind, a great antidote to the stress and bustle of this busy world, very beneficial if one has a stressful life or job.
  38. **Health - medical importance (32 respondents)** Medical evidence is demonstrating how important exercise, walking and relaxation are to physical and mental health. The government increasingly appreciates the big economic and social benefits from improving physical and mental health and reducing obesity. The value of the Leckhampton Fields as a natural rural environment for exercise and recreation will be appreciated more and more, and we need to make the Fields even more

easily available year round and encourage even more use of them by local people. Sports England's most recent campaign has highlighted the ever-increasing need for women in particular to exercise in these times of increasing obesity - don't take these fields away from hardworking young people.

39. **Health - psychological and mental (69 respondents)** Being in this countryside and close to nature gives great psychological benefit and sense of wellbeing, physical and spiritual release, and energy. It gives perspective on problems, enables you to see the larger picture, helps better mental balance and health. One respondent says that she came to this area suffering from depression and on medication, and she believes that it has been the combination of Leckhampton Fields and Leckhampton Hill that have 'cured' her of the depression and enabled her to live a full life without medication.
40. **Health - healthy living (119 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are a key part of healthy living and wellbeing for very many local people and families (and for dogs also). They are suitable for all ages and enable older residents to exercise. They help combat sedentary lifestyle, stress, obesity and loneliness.
41. **Health - therapeutic exercise (15 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are vital for people who are required to take regular walks for medical reasons. One respondent says 'For people like me with heart disease and/or COPD, the Fields are life-saving for daily exercise and air quality'. The fresh air also helps alleviate asthma.
42. **History - old Leckhampton (42 respondents)** The Fields give a great sense of history, links with the past, feeling of place and belonging as you walk round the area. The land is still much as it has been used for centuries. It is important to conserve this and for current and future generations to have a sense of history in their locality. The moat and Medieval cottages, Leckhampton Manor and St. Peter's Church, the pre-enclosure fields and hedgerows, are a very important part of Leckhampton history. Part of what appears to be an ancient hollow way crosses the field north of Moat Cottage behind the other two cottages.
43. **History - old rural environment (16 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are a highly important old rural environment that needs to be preserved for all the reasons cited in question 4 and because it is so heavily used. It is important to preserve the ancient hedgerows, trees, orchards and wildlife and the variety of agricultural use that gives the Fields such character, beauty and links with the past.
44. **Housing - need for housing (5 respondents)** The drive to build so many new homes is not a proper reason to sacrifice the tremendous community value of the Leckhampton Fields. It would be even more tragic if the Fields are sacrificed because the housing need has been over-estimated.
45. **Housing - priority for more housing (2 respondents)** We ourselves have never used the Leckhampton Fields and we believe that protecting them is unimportant compared with the requirement for more housing in Cheltenham.
46. **Housing - pressure to fill in (5 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields are very valuable to local people as an amenity enclosed in and easily accessible from populated areas, but this close proximity is not a valid reason to turn this amenity into an urban extension.
47. **Housing - protecting views (10 respondents)** From the footpaths and fields there are amazing views of Leckhampton Hill; we need to ensure any development does not obstruct them.

48. **Leckhampton character and quality of life (66 respondents)** The Fields are crucial to the character of Leckhampton, its identity, its quality of life and its community.
49. **Leckhampton Court Hospice (2 respondents)** The Sue Ryder Hospice visitors and care staff find respite from the beautiful scenery of the Hill.
50. **Lived here for many years (135 respondents)** I/we grew up here and/or have lived here for decades.
51. **Lived here for many years (63 respondents)** Our children grew up here and love this area / our grandchildren love it
52. **Local Green Space (13 respondents)** Strongly support the creation of the LGS and the need to stop the continual erosion and despoiling of this beautiful area.
53. **Local Green Space (12 respondents)** LGS designation should enable the use and value of the fields and footpaths to be enhanced; perhaps there could be a managed wildflower meadow, some cycle tracks and better access to the viewpoints for disabled and infirm.
54. **LGS boundary (4 respondents)** All of the area proposed for the LGS is really important for local people, their leisure, and their physical and mental wellbeing.
55. **LGS boundary - smallholdings (42 respondents)** The smallholdings are a lovely part that should be preserved and restored. They are part of the Church's Glebe Land. We need to preserve this and not accept that urbanisation is inevitable. We love the atmosphere of the smallholdings, talking to the owners, and seeing the seasons come and go.
56. **LGS boundary - Northern Fields (47 respondents)** The Northern Fields and smallholdings are very precious to many nearby residents in Warden Hill and together with Robinswood Field they are the only local space residents have. They are vital for recreation and as an escape from the A46 traffic noise and pollution. They should have been kept in the LGS as in the original 2013 submission and not removed. The Northern Fields also provide a stunning country view across to Leckhampton Hill from the A46 at what is the main 'gateway' to Cheltenham from the south. The view across the 'pig field' is especially cherished by motorists and local people. These views and the countryside aspect give a good first impression of Cheltenham as a beautiful town.
57. **LGS boundary - Moorend Stream (1 respondent)** The LGS needs to preserve a wider green buffer zone along the north end of the Moorend Stream footpath
58. **LGS boundary - stick to original boundary (32 respondents)** The LGS as proposed in 2013 was right; it should not have been reduced. There should be no major development south/east of the A46 or on White Cross Green. Taking out the smallholdings and nurseries is a missed opportunity to apply vision to local resources and economy. It would be better if the nurseries and orchards along Kidnappers Lane were used for allotments rather than being built on. It is also folly to believe that the development on the areas not included in the LGS will not make a huge impact upon the adjacent areas.
59. **LGS boundary - White Cross Green (58 respondents)** There needs to be more open green space at the north end of White Cross Green than is currently proposed in the LGS application. I/we suggest that, if necessary, the buffer zone along Leckhampton Lane might be reduced to help allow for more LGS at the north side. The LGS at the north end needs to provide sufficient amenity space and children's play area for residents in the Lanes Estate and also sufficient space for the

- Cheltenham Circular Path and for seeing the particularly fine views of Leckhampton Hill from the path.
60. **LGS boundary - White Cross Green (30 respondents)** The LGS area proposed on White Cross Green is too small. There needs to be a wider/larger green strip / park area at the north side of White Cross Green to provide an amenity space and children's play area, for the Cheltenham Circular Path and for wildlife/habitat.
  61. **Place for relaxation and reflection (104 respondents)** Relaxing and walking on the Leckhampton Fields are a central part of my/our life and the life of many local families. The Fields provide a calming atmosphere, a haven of peace and tranquillity, a place to really relax in an increasingly frenetic world, to be close to nature, away from traffic, to enjoy solitude and reflection, to contemplate, pray, meditate, practice mindfulness. They provide room to think and recharge.
  62. **Place of tranquillity (54 respondents)** Greatly value the rural tranquillity / slower pace and escape from hectic modern life / relaxing after work. Walking on the fields and footpaths is a great source of enjoyment and inspiration.
  63. **Rarity of this rural landscape (9 respondents)** This type of largely unspoiled old rural landscape is increasingly rare and needs protecting, particularly when in the case of the Leckhampton Fields it has such high community value and is so well used.
  64. **Reason for living here (176 respondents)** Why we came to live here / Primary reason for living here / The fields make this a very special place to live for us and many other people / We would look to move away / be impelled to move away from the area if development took over the Leckhampton Fields.
  65. **Safety (45 respondents)** These fields and footpaths are a very safe/secure area, including for jogging, walking and dog walking, and for children to play.
  66. **Social and community benefits (67 respondents)** The Fields provide a great social environment for walking with and meeting friends and new people; important in fostering an active and harmonious community, and preventing loneliness and isolation. One can meet dozens of people every day jogging, exercising and just walking their dogs. It is easy to say hello and chat with people. Also uplifting is the obvious joy the area brings to people you meet of all ages. It is a pleasure just watching people enjoying themselves in the fresh air.
  67. **Housing - social housing (1 respondent)** We need more social and affordable housing, but we won't get much here because property prices are so high. It is more important to maintain the quality of environment for the existing estates in south Cheltenham.
  68. **Tourism and economic value (6 respondents)** Nature and open space has economic value; important for tourism
  69. **Traffic, pollution and schooling (137 respondents)** The serious problem of traffic congestion and pollution would be of grave concern if there were development on the areas not included in the LGS; likewise the problems of the shortage of available schooling and potential flooding of Warden Hill.
  70. **Urban countryside - delights (31 respondents)** Love the uncongested openness, the lovely views through the changing seasons, and being so easily in beautiful countryside. The views of Leckhampton Hill are stunning.
  71. **Urban countryside - fruits of nature (58 respondents)** In season I/we regularly gather produce - blackberries, sloes, damsons, elderflower, greenery, manure.

72. **Urban countryside - open areas (88 respondents)** Very important having open recreational land and real countryside close by the residential areas. A great benefit to Cheltenham.
73. **Urban countryside - real countryside matters (63 respondents)** Real countryside with nature, heritage and farming is different from parks, sports grounds and play-areas; people need both and it is so valuable having within the town this rural area that is unspoilt and so full of interest. The Fields are easily accessible to many thousands of households on all sides and large enough to feel one is in countryside.
74. **Urban countryside - really special area (39 respondents)** Having such fine rural landscape with its tranquillity and rich footpath network inside a town is something very special and rare and what the LGS legislation is there to protect and encourage.
75. **Urban countryside - sanctuary (76 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields provide fresh air and escape from busy roads, urban rush, noise, exhaust-pollution, pressures of modern life.
76. **Urban/rural balance (2 respondents)** Having lived in Cheltenham for the past 11 years after growing up in a Cotswold village, Leckhampton is the first area where I have truly felt at home - a perfect compromise between town and country.
77. **Urban/rural living (84 respondents)** Greatly value having the benefits of both country living and urban living, both within walking distance, being so close to work and to countryside.
78. **Value for children - many things to do (128 respondents)** Wonderful place for children - so many things they can do on the fields and for exercise. Children love this area and its rural environment - the freedom, family walks, flying kites, exploring, looking at nature, spotting and watching animals, playing in fields, cycling through the fields, building dens, climbing trees, being fascinated by the water and streams.
79. **Value for children - seeing nature (100 respondents)** So important to have clean green space for children to play in and appreciate nature. Excellent for teaching children about nature and farming and letting them observe it at first hand, for showing them wildlife, gathering specimens for wildlife classes at school, and encouraging children to ask questions and to appreciate and value beauty.
80. **Value for office workers (2 respondents)** If you are working in an office and living on a tight budget, the Leckhampton Fields for dog walking, exercise and fresh air are a life saver.
81. **Value for older residents - being safe (24 respondents)** The Fields give older and less mobile residents safe and effective access to beautiful countryside, walking and exercise.
82. **Value for older residents - keeping fit (1 respondent)** For me, as an elderly resident, it is vital to have green spaces close at hand to walk in safely and thus help to keep healthy and not a burden on the community.
83. **Value for older residents - getting out (1 respondent)** This is the only outing and exercise I get now that I am in my nineties. I rely on my daughter taking me out when she walks her dog in the fields and nearby.
84. **Value for youth activities (2 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields provide the open space for regular outdoor activities of Bethesda Scout Group (Great Norwood Street). The Group has over 100 young people. The meeting place has no land for outdoor activities. Leckhampton Fields are in walking distance and used by the

- Group all the year round. Activities include hiking (at night also), orienteering, nature, games, astronomy, outdoor challenges etc.
85. **Value of the level ground and footpath network (51 respondents)** The flatness of the fields and network of footpaths are good for children and elderly; not everyone can walk up the steep slope of Leckhampton Hill or risk the often rough and slippery paths. Older people can still walk in the Leckhampton Fields into their nineties. The flatness is also good for children who are disabled or with special/additional needs, and there is good access for disabled users.
  86. **Value of wildlife and farm animals (44 respondents)** I love walking with children/grandchildren to see and feed farm animals and see wildlife
  87. **Valuing open spaces for the future (14 respondents)** It is one of Britain's great triumphs that we have valued and protected our open spaces and finest views for future generations despite being such a crowded island. We all need to keep doing this.
  88. **Views over the fields (26 respondents)** A big part of the charm of the Leckhampton Fields is the multitude of lovely views in all directions across the fields, from one field to another. These include many fine views with Leckhampton Hill in the background. White Cross Green not only has beautiful views of Leckhampton Hill but also, from its high point, gives panoramic views across the Severn Valley to the Forest of Dean, May Hill, the Malvern Hills, Tewkesbury Abbey and as far as the Droitwich radio masts. People, whether local or passers-by, much enjoy looking at the Leckhampton Fields from the roads and from Leckhampton Hill.
  89. **Village atmosphere (13 respondents)** The Fields keep Leckhampton as a village rather than just an extension of urban Cheltenham.
  90. **Warden Hill - quality of life (18 respondents)** The Leckhampton Fields add greatly to the desirability of living in Warden Hill, enabling us to get away from streets and traffic and enjoy countryside and the tranquil peacefulness abounding with wildlife and birds.
  91. **Wildlife - at close range (108 respondents)** Greatly enjoy seeing and hearing wildlife at close range, birdwatching, watching the great variety of wildlife
  92. **Wildlife - diversity (62 respondents)** Love the diversity of landscape, trees, wild flowers, vegetation, many species of small birds, woodpeckers, owls, buzzards, bats, deer, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs, and other wildlife. Beautiful seeing the deer in mornings and evenings. There are also the winter visitors including redwings and fieldfare.
  93. **Wildlife - in urban area (33 respondents)** Provides space for nature in the urban area; keeps us in touch with wildlife and wild places; we need to protect our ecosystems
  94. **Wildlife - preservation (51 respondents)** Important for preserving wildlife and species in the area including the great crested and other newts, butterflies, bats, grass snakes, slow worms, water voles, stoats, owls and cuckoos.
  95. **Wildlife - rich haven (37 respondents)** Haven for wildlife / richness of wildlife / great diversity of wildlife in the ancient hedgerows
  96. **Work activity on the Fields (9 respondents)** Working on the smallholdings, tending to livestock, planting and looking after trees, maintaining the footpaths, walking clients for therapy

What is valued by the largest number of people is having easy and quick access to open green space for recreation, dog walking and exercise and also the way the variety of scenery and changing character over the seasons makes the Leckhampton Fields constantly rewarding every day. This statement is made in one form or other by a total of 317 respondents (21%). Allied to this, another feature people value highly is the ability to access the fields without having to use a car (116 respondents).

Several hundred respondents cite the great value of 'urban countryside': having countryside right on one's doorstep and at the same time also having the amenities of the town. In a range of statements, several hundred respondents say how much they love the wildlife and animals on the Fields.

Around two hundred respondents cite the value of the Leckhampton Fields for children, both for the variety of activities and also for exploring and appreciating nature. The safety of the area for young and old is also appreciated and the social atmosphere and the way people talk to others, meet people and made friends through walking and dog walking.

Over 150 respondents say that they and/or their family have been living in the Leckhampton area for many decades and 176 respondents say that the Leckhampton Field are the reason or a major reason that they live here. The importance of preserving the Fields as an amenity for current and future generations is raised by 114 respondents.

The value of the Fields for healthy living is raised by 119 respondents and there are many other comments on the value for physical and mental health for various age groups. Over 50 respondents make the point that the flatness of the fields and the network of footpaths are good for children and elderly, noting that not everyone can walk up the steep slopes of Leckhampton Hill or risk the often rough and slippery paths on the Hill. It is commented that older residents still walk in the Leckhampton Fields into their nineties. It is also pointed out that the flatness is good for children who are disabled or with special/additional needs, and there is good access for disabled users.

The consultation questionnaire specifically asked people to give their views on the updated local green space and whether there they felt any other area that is currently included could be left out. Apart from the one form mentioned earlier, no respondents have suggested reducing the area of the LGS further or taking any particular area out of the LGS. There are over 200 comments about areas that respondents feel should not have been removed.

Many respondents objected to the amount of land on White Cross Green that had been taken out of the proposed LGS in response to the pressure from the JCS and TBC: 88 respondents argued that there was too little amenity land protected on the northern side of White Cross Green for local residents; many respondents also emphasised how beautiful the view of Leckhampton Hill is from White Cross Green and the importance of protecting the view from the Cheltenham Circular Path as much as possible. Some of the respondents were walkers living elsewhere in the area and who use the Cheltenham Circular Path as mentioned earlier.

As for the part of the proposed LGS in Cheltenham Borough, 32 respondents said that the Parish Council was wrong in reducing the LGS from what was proposed in 2013, and

a further 83 respondents emphasised the importance of preserving the Northern Fields and smallholdings, if at all possible. Cheltenham's MP, Martin Horwood, was one of the respondents who argued most strongly that the Parish Council should seriously consider putting all or part of the Northern Fields and smallholdings back into the LGS.

Concerning the proposed removal of the orchards and nurseries in Kidnappers Lane from the LGS, there were a few comments from respondents that it would be better to use the area for orchards and allotments or to revive it for food production rather than to build on it. There were many more comments under question 7 (discussed later) about the impact of allowing development so close to Leckhampton Hill and the need to make absolutely sure that any development is very well screened and very sympathetic.

Although more germane to the neighbourhood plan than to the LGS, concerns were raised by 137 respondents over how any development on the land not included in the LGS would affect the already very serious traffic congestion and pollution. Concerns were also expressed over the problems of the shortage of available schooling and potential flooding of housing in Warden Hill and along Hatherley Brook.

## **6. Importance of the views from Leckhampton Hill**

In question 6, respondents were asked to say how important the views from Leckhampton Fields are to them and how important to Cheltenham. As with question 5, many respondents explained why the views are important without explicitly saying how important they considered they were. Two thirds of the forms (62% of respondents), however, did say explicitly how important the views were. The majority of them considered that the views were very or extremely important and using the same scoring scheme as for question 5, the average score was 2.82 out of 3.

The various points made in answer to question 6 have been amalgamated into 29 summaries below.

1. **Beauty in all seasons (5 respondents)** We have walked on the Hill for decades and have wonderful memories of the views in different seasons and conditions.
2. **Cheltenham's iconic views (135 respondents)** The iconic views from Leckhampton Hill are priceless and very important to Cheltenham's beauty, fame, economy, residents and visitors. The Hill and its views are a big part of what makes Cheltenham a lovely place to live and makes people proud to live here.
3. **Cheltenham's identity (70 respondents)** Cheltenham is famous as a 'town in a park' and 'capital of the Cotswolds' with its avenues of trees and surrounded by beautiful countryside. Leckhampton Hill and its views are crucial to Cheltenham's setting and character, as well as to its attractiveness and high quality of life. From the Hill, the green spaces of the Leckhampton Fields brings out the greenness of Cheltenham and also make a link with the past before Cheltenham grew as a town. The area still looks like a collection of villages that have grown together, still with green spaces.
4. **Cheltenham's national reputation (49 respondents)** The views from Leckhampton Hill are known nationally. They are views that Cheltenham should be very proud of, particularly the iconic views from the Devil's Chimney and



- Observation Table. They are an important part of what makes Cheltenham so special and are one of the joys of living here. These are views that people elsewhere yearn for. Visitors are always stunned by the views and say how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful place. It is not only the views to Wales, the Malverns and Shropshire that one admires but also the view of Cheltenham itself and of the Leckhampton fields below.
5. **Cultural and scientific interest (12 respondents)** From the top of the Hill one can observe and study the geology spanning 700 million years, the geography, history, communities, farming and land-use. The history and settings of the towns and landmarks in the Severn Valley can be well appreciated from the Hill, especially on a clear day.
  6. **Environment and wildlife (4 respondents)** Leckhampton Hill is important for its ecology, environment, wildlife and views of nature.
  7. **Exercise, running and walking (21 respondents)** I/we/our family regularly walk/run on Leckhampton Hill. It is the views that above all make the Hill unique and such a wonderful place – not only the distant views but also the beautiful foreground.
  8. **Family and friends (66 respondents)** The Hill is a great place to go with family and friends to admire the views walking together or having picnics, or walking the dog on the Hill and feeling on top of the world. We love the views and always show them to people visiting us. The views can be especially amazing at sunrise and sunsets and with special cloud effects. We must not diminish this wonderful place. Its inspiring magical views add so much quality to living, working in and visiting the Cheltenham area.
  9. **Leckhampton Fields add extra pleasure (2 respondents)** Whether walking towards or back from Leckhampton Hill, the Leckhampton Fields make an important contribution to the pleasure
  10. **Leckhampton Fields matter even more (15 respondents)** Whilst greatly appreciating Leckhampton Hill and its wonderful views, for me/us personally the Leckhampton Fields matter even more.
  11. **Future generations (53 respondents)** Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils need to treasure and at all costs conserve this beautiful and historic landscape for current and future generations; they seriously risk ruining it by overdevelopment. These stunning views are an inheritance we must pass on.
  12. **Health - keeping fit (25 respondents)** The amazing view is a good inducement to walk up and along the Hill and keep fit.
  13. **Health and well-being (30 respondents)** Walking up/along the Hill and admiring the views is very good for mental health and relieving stress, as well as for exercise. One gets a great feeling of wellbeing simply being surrounded by such beautiful countryside and open air.
  14. **Historic views (24 respondents)** The landscape is beautiful and historic, an ancient landscape that retains past beauty; great distances that you can see to

the far hills plus the historical significance of different sites from the Stone Age onwards

15. **QEII status (2 respondents)** Why have Leckhampton Hill and the Leckhampton Fields not got QEII protection like Burrows Field and Weavers Field?
16. **Reason that we live here (60 respondents)** Having Leckhampton Hill with its wonderful views is one of the main reasons that we live / work here.
17. **Rural foreground is equally important (35 respondents)** It is not just the distant views that matter, wonderful though they are. The rural foreground of Leckhampton and the Leckhampton Fields is also extremely important because of its greenness, its richness of features adding so much to the interest of the view, and its pastoral beauty that sets the atmosphere of the scene. It retains the quality of a typical old English landscape of small green fields, glebe land, smallholdings and orchards divided by ancient hedgerows and with many fine trees. Cheltenham must not lose it.
18. **Rural foreground must be preserved (18 respondents)** The beauty and peacefulness of the view depends very much on preserving the rural foreground of Leckhampton. The dropping away of the Hill to green fields, scattered rural houses, villages and woods is very special. No view is its equal in terms of visual contrast and detail.
19. **Rural/urban balance in the view (7 respondents)** The area currently has the right rural/urban balance. We must preserve this and avoid overdevelopment, particularly suburban estates. The definition of traditional village settlements within their rural setting is still clear for Shurdington and Leckhampton. Proper strategic planning requires protecting this.
20. **Superb views that are nationally famous (64 respondents)** Stunning iconic views, especially on a clear day; one of the finest views in England; nationally famous, a highlight of the Cotswold Way and this part of the Cotswolds, the views are irreplaceable and must not be spoiled.
21. **Superb views that are rare and irreplaceable (71 respondents)** Great views and landscape - such great views are rare and irreplaceable and must be conserved. The beauty could be lost forever if additional building is allowed. Any development should be well away from the AONB, be well screened and very sympathetic.
22. **Supreme beauty one never tires of (104 respondents)** Breathtakingly beautiful views that one never tires of, ever changing through the seasons, ever surprisingly lovely, so varied, interesting, inspirational, giving an uplifting joy, happiness, calmness and sense of freedom and wellbeing, views that one can absorb and appreciate every day, that are good for the soul, that refresh the mind, expand one's outlook and give perspective on life in this hectic world. These wonderful views draw very many people from near and far to enjoy the Hill.
23. **Stunning panorama (55 respondents)** Open panoramic views that are supremely beautiful, still largely unspoiled and that must be preserved as they are; huge sense of beauty, spaciousness and peace, a panorama that changes with the weather and the season. We and so many other people from near and far get

- enormous pleasure from these views: the lovely peace and tranquillity of looking across to the hills - Churchdown, May and Malvern Hills and beyond, and the semi-rural views across the Leckhampton Fields.
24. **Tourism and visitors (83 respondents)** The views draw people continuously and attract tourism to Cheltenham and the Cotswolds. Cheltenham needs to ensure they are properly protected - for visitors and locals.
  25. **Value to elderly and less mobile residents (5 respondents)** The views from Leckhampton Hill are very important for old people who can get there by car even if they can no longer climb the Hill. Also important are the views of the Hill from the A46 and across the pig field.
  26. **Views across the Fields (24 respondents)** For many people, especially those not in easy walking range of Leckhampton Hill, the views of the Hill from where they live and from the Leckhampton Fields are even more important than the views from the Hill itself.
  27. **Views of the Hill (13 respondents)** When walking in the Leckhampton Fields and lanes, the views of Leckhampton Hill are lovely and inspiring. The view of the Hill across White Cross Green from the Cheltenham Circular Footpath is particularly fine and very important to us in the Lanes Estate and to our children.
  28. **Vulnerability (34 respondents)** The views and the rural beauty of the Hill and of the Leckhampton Fields could easily be ruined and would be impossible to replace. The green belt still preserves a green corridor west across the Severn Valley, but the proposed development at White Cross Green would cut across that. The Leckhampton Fields provide a crucial green rural buffer between the urban area and the Hill. This buffer softens the urban impact and keeps Cheltenham attractively distant. It must be preserved.
  29. **Wonderland Chess Board view (1 respondent - newspaper cutting)** The view from Leckhampton Hill across the fields and hedgerows below is said to have inspired the Giant Chess Board of fields and hedgerows in 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'.

Hundreds of respondents praise the stunning beauty of the Hill and its views at all times of the year. Nearly 300 respondents comment on the importance of the views to Cheltenham's beauty, setting, identity, character, residents, quality of life, reputation and economy and the importance to tourism. Overlapping with question 7, around 100 respondents emphasise the great importance of the Leckhampton Fields to the view and that the view would easily be spoiled by developments.

Sixty respondents say that having Leckhampton Hill and its wonderful views is one of the main reasons that they live or work in Cheltenham and 66 respondents say the Hill is a great place to go with family and friends. The benefits of exercise, walking, running, fitness and benefits to health are mentioned by 76 respondents.

One respondent submitted an interesting press cutting on the origins of Alice in Wonderland, which said that the view from Leckhampton Hill over the fields below is believed to have inspired the giant chess board of fields and hedgerows in 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'. Lewis Carroll took Alice Liddell and her sisters to see the

view from Leckhampton Hill in April 1863, when he visited the three sisters while they were staying in Charlton Kings. The 'Looking Glass' was the mirror on the wall of their house in Charlton Kings. Lewis Carroll had begun telling the story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to Alice and her sisters in 1862. He wrote the book in 1864 and it was published in 1865.

## **7. Effect of development coming closer to the Hill.**

In question 7, respondents were asked how much they thought it would damage the views if development came closer to Leckhampton Hill. The responses to question 7 have been amalgamated into 29 summaries below.

1. **AONB and Leckhampton (202 respondents)** To look down on modern housing estates rather than the Leckhampton Fields would irreparably degrade this cherished view, diminish the Cotswold Way and the AONB, and make Leckhampton Village part of urban Cheltenham. It would damage the fame of Cheltenham and this beautiful part of the Cotswolds and reduce their attractiveness for visitors and tourism. The loss of the Leckhampton Fields to development would contradict the adopted Cotswolds AONB management plan 2013-18 which asks local authorities to protect the setting of the AONB.
2. **Criminal to spoil such a beautiful viewpoint (70 respondents)** You have only to look at the eye-sore at Brockworth to see how wrong development can spoil a beautiful area. The ruined view from the scarp around Coopers Hill shows how beauty is turned to ugliness. Leckhampton Hill has one of the finest views in the country. It would be a crime to vandalise such beauty, quite unforgivable for such an inspiring and uplifting viewpoint.
3. **Development creep (71 respondents)** There has been a continual erosion of green fields as they have been engulfed by the 'lava flow' of development. The proposed LGS is essential to prevent this creeping development continuing and profoundly spoiling the view as well as destroying local amenities.
4. **Diversity of landscape (32 respondents)** The rural foreground is full of different areas and diversity which add greatly to the views, a lovely mix of fields, orchards, hamlets, Leckhampton Village and the town beyond. Developing here on the scale and style of housing that is being proposed would convert it into a boring housing estate.
5. **Duty to conserve for the future (49 respondents)** We teach children how important it is to conserve the environment. Failing to protect the wonderful and historic views from Leckhampton Hill for the future would set a very bad example and be a great shame, particularly on councillors and planners. We owe it to the next generation to preserve such a naturally beautiful area. Once lost, it can never be recovered.
6. **Duty to conserve Cheltenham's famous viewpoint (48 respondents)** Development would spoil the view and the natural setting and balance of Cheltenham from its most famous viewpoint. Cheltenham will sink lower as a good place to live if it allows its beautiful and famous local scenery to be despoiled. Cheltenham needs to treasure and not waste what assets it has.

7. **Duty to preserve Cheltenham's prosperity (18 respondents)** Cheltenham needs to preserve and make more of Leckhampton Hill's specialness if it wishes to attract tourists and more employment into the town. Cheltenham needs to attract more investment to create jobs to enable local people to buy new housing. Just building houses does not create jobs. Cheltenham needs to be able to attract employers and jobs and Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common is one of its main attractions.
8. **Duty to preserve Cheltenham's quality of life (32 respondents)** Development close to Leckhampton Hill would greatly diminish south Cheltenham as a place to live and Leckhampton Hill as an amenity for Cheltenham residents; the views from the Hill and of the Hill would both be affected.
9. **Duty to respect the views from the Cotswold scarp (28 respondents)** With the developments around Bishops Cleeve and now the proposals in the JCS, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham are in danger of becoming an unsightly sprawl along the Cotswold scarp. Both borough councils have a duty to treasure and conserve these wonderful views over the Severn Vale and avoid despoiling them with urban sprawl. It is important to the view from Leckhampton Hill that one can see a clear edge to the town and that this is sufficiently far away from the Hill to prevent the appearance of urban sprawl.
10. **Impact of development at White Cross Green (SD2) (32 respondents)** Building at White Cross Green (SD2) would greatly damage the view across green belt and conflict with JCS 2012 recommendation not to build on this site or at most to build only on the north field. Building on White Cross Green as currently proposed would slice through the green belt corridor from Leckhampton Hill along the green belt to the Severn Valley.
11. **Impact of size and closeness (29 respondents)** How bad the damage would be must obviously depend on the size of any development, how close it came, whether it affected the AONB, how sympathetic and well-screened it was and what trees and hedgerows might be lost; certainly a large development close to the Hill would be very damaging.
12. **Impact of traffic and pollution (48 respondents)** Development would also create more traffic, noise and pollution that would tend to spoil the rural environment
13. **Impact on environment and ecology (14 respondents)** Development would damage not just the views, but also the natural history and geography, and the local flora and fauna.
14. **Impact on Leckhampton character (22 respondents)** Development close to the Hill would ruin the village-like character of Leckhampton and the rural/pastoral character of the area. It would merge the village into town and reduce the natural open space serving Cheltenham.
15. **Impact on openness (60 respondents)** Development would greatly diminish the rural outlook, openness, sense of freedom and make the view urban, closed in, claustrophobic.

16. **Impact on quality of the views (62 respondents)** At the moment the edge of Cheltenham along the A46 still looks fairly distant and the eye can skip across Cheltenham and also along the green belt to the Severn Vale and distant hills beyond. Developing closer would be much more intrusive and damaging in this location. It would change and spoil the special nature of this area. The distant views would still be wonderful but overall the view would be much more urban and no longer so outstanding. One respondent also observes that part of the beauty of the views is the way they recede into the distance and that developing close to the Hill could spoil this by diminishing the sense of height and scale.
17. **Impact on risk of flooding (31 respondents)** There is wide concern among residents over how development might affect floodwater flow off the Hill
18. **Impact on rural/urban balance (72 respondents)** Major development close to the Hill would spoil the good rural/urban balance and interest of the view; turn it into urban sprawl.
19. **Impact on views from the scarp (7 respondents)** The views from the AONB above Leckhampton Manor are quite special and would be damaged just like the views from the top of the Hill.
20. **Impact on views of the Hill (21 respondents)** Development would damage views of the Hill as well as views from the Hill. The views of the Hill are very important to local people and to Cheltenham. As well as the views from the Fields themselves, there are also the views of the Hill from the A46 and west of the A46 including the cherished view across the pig field at the 'gateway' to Cheltenham, which provides so many people, residents and drivers, with a beautiful uninterrupted view of the Hill. The views of the Hill are also important to the skyline from the town; without them the town would be more oppressively suburban.
21. **Impact on wildlife and the rural character (71 respondents)** Development would irretrievably spoil the views, character, rural feel of the area; would make the Hill and view suburban; it would also affect the wildlife and reduce the enjoyment of both the wildlife and the views.
22. **Importance of the rural foreground (32 respondents)** The rural foreground of Leckhampton Village and the Leckhampton Fields beyond is vital to the idyllic view from Leckhampton Hill. The patchwork of green fields, with their different hues through the seasons, is a wonderful part of the beauty. The foreground complements the wide distant views across the Severn Valley. Development would certainly blight the view both through the loss of these beautiful fields and through bringing urban Cheltenham much closer to the Hill.
23. **Must protect LGS, AONB and Green Belt (19 respondents)** There must be no development in the proposed LGS area, AONB and greenbelt; any development close to the Hill will spoil/damage the views irreversibly.
24. **No scope for major development (25 respondents)** The Lanes Estate and other development, such as Morrisons, have already tarnished the view. Any further encroachment would destroy the whole character of the area. Nothing closer please.

25. **Scope for some sympathetic development (24 respondents)** Some sympathetic pockets of development might be possible provided they were small and in keeping, were not too high or close to the AONB, and provided they did not lead to development creep.
26. **Sympathetic development along the A46 (5 respondents)** Just in terms of the views from Leckhampton Hill, some development on the Northern Fields along A46 could be acceptable but it would reduce the view of the Hill from the A46. So it would be regrettable to have development on the Northern Fields.
27. **Sympathetic development close to the Hill (13 respondents)** It is essential to ensure that any development on the Leckhampton Fields is sufficiently sympathetic. The density and style of any development is hugely important; suburban estates loved by developers would be an eyesore if they were at all close to the Hill, including at White Cross Green. Development on the orchards/nurseries east of Kidnappers Lane would only be acceptable if it was very sympathetic and attractively well screened with trees, preserving the trees within the site as well as the hedgerows. The trees in the old orchards are worth preserving as far as possible.
28. **Sympathetic development – protect Medieval Leckhampton (8 respondents)** It would be vital that any development did not affect the settings and views of Leckhampton Court, St Peters Church and the old cottages of Medieval Leckhampton.
29. **White Cross Green (SD2) – suggestions for reducing the impact on the view (5 respondents)** Having a wide corridor of green space on the north side of any development on White Cross Green could avoid it appearing to be a single conurbation with the Lanes Estate. Also, extending the strip of LGS west of Farm lane all the way to Leckhampton Lane would help to screen any development from Farm Lane and from Leckhampton Hill.

The overall theme of the responses is horror at the prospect of development coming closer to the Hill. There is a lot of emphasis on the duty of councillors and planners to protect Leckhampton Hill and its views for their importance to the fame of Cheltenham, for attracting tourists and employers, to the quality of life of Cheltenham and in making this a place worth living in, and for its importance to the Cotswold scarp, AONB and Cotswold Way. Seventy respondents specifically cite the damage that has been done to the AONB and to the views from the Cotswold Scarp particularly around Brockworth as a warning of what could happen to the views from Leckhampton Hill without proper care. Seventy-one respondents cite the danger from development creep and the role of the LGS in limiting further erosion of the green space.

Hundreds of respondents comment on the different ways that development would spoil the views, how development would take away the openness and diversity and destroy the small village character of Leckhampton in the foreground, on the great importance of the Leckhampton Fields to the view and the need to preserve the green gap between Leckhampton Village and the Cheltenham conurbation, on the need to keep the right rural/urban balance and to prevent the view from becoming predominantly just a view over urban Cheltenham. Respondents emphasise the importance of the rural foreground and the way the patchwork of green fields, with their different hues through the seasons, is a key part of the beauty seen from the Hill. Respondents also highlight the impact that

development at White Cross Green would have on the view west to Wales by slicing through the green corridor from Leckhampton Hill along the green belt to the Severn Valley beyond.

Some respondents make the obvious but valid point that the impact of development would depend on its scale, closeness to the Hill and on how well screened and sympathetic it was. The question of course is how one could control any development so that its impact is acceptable. A small number of respondents comment on this and also on the scope for sympathetic development along the A46. Overall, however, respondents are clearly nervous that whatever good words are said about sympathetic development, planners will not be able to constrain profit-driven developers from spoiling the views.

## **8. Conclusions and issues for neighbourhood planning**

The consultation has confirmed what was well established from previous surveys and petitions (see Appendix 2) that the Leckhampton Fields are very special to a large number of local people and that they are well used by residents on all sides. The number of people responding was about two-thirds of the over two thousand people who signed the petition on the Leckhampton Fields in July 2011. This is impressive given the very short consultation period with people having only a few days to reply. Completing the questionnaire was also more onerous than signing a petition and the reply postage was not prepaid. The consultation also only covered homes up to 0.7 miles from the Fields, and there are many people who use the Fields from further away. So overall this was a strong response and the answers to questions 5 to 7 show how highly people value the Leckhampton Fields and the views from Leckhampton Hill and how concerned they are about the impact of development.

The close agreement between the actual usage of Lotts Meadow measured in an on-the-ground survey in 2011 (Table 7) and the usage calculated from the consultation replies suggests that at least 80% of people who use the Fields frequently replied to the consultation. It also adds confidence to the figures for how much people use the other parts of the Leckhampton Fields.

The Central Fields in the triangle bounded by Kidnappers Lane, Farm Lane and Church Road come out from the consultation as the area that people use most. Lotts Meadow comes a close second, which is not surprising given the amount that Lotts Meadow is used for dog walking. White Cross Green is the area that is least used with only about 40% of the usage of the Central Fields. Again this is not surprising as White Cross Green is furthest away from most local residents. The usage of the smallholdings, of Robinswood Field and of the circular walk(s) supports the Council's view that these need to be preserved as much as possible.

Table 4 and answers to question 5 confirm that people use the Leckhampton Fields mainly for walking and dog walking from their homes but also for a variety of other activities including with children. Respondents regard the Leckhampton Fields as a great local asset and in the Parish Council should aim in the neighbourhood plan consultation to find out what would attract even more local people to use the Fields and how their amenity value can be enhanced.



The analysis in Tables 9 to 11 suggests that an important factor in how frequently people use the fields is the time it takes them to walk there from home. It is worth considering whether the distances can be made shorter and whether access can be made quicker in other ways.

1. The fields are easily accessible from most directions, but there is scope to improve the access from the A46 as the track through the smallholdings is about 200 metres along the A46 from the Woodlands Road junction. If development were to happen on the Northern Fields, it would be valuable to provide access along Hatherley Brook (as is proposed by Bovis-Miller in their planning application). It would be helpful if this footpath along Hatherley Brook could also connect to the north end of Robinswood Field. This would shorten the access distance from the Woodlands Road junction by around 0.2 km.
2. Better access from Woodlands Road would not only benefit residents in Warden Hill but also make it easier to reach the Fields from Merestones and other roads south of The Park via the footpath to St Michaels Road. This footpath has recently been renovated by the County Council (thanks to Cllr. Iain Dobie).
3. For houses near Up Hatherley Way, the most scenic route to reach the Fields is via the Cheltenham Circular Path over White Cross Green. This is one reason for wanting the LGS on White Cross Green to extend along the whole route of the Cheltenham Circular Path. There is an alternative route via the footpath from Brizen Farm to Farm Lane, but this involves walking through the Lanes Estate.
4. Access to the Fields from Farm Lane, particularly in winter, would be improved by better maintenance of the two footpaths on the Farm Lane side of Hatherley Brook. Mud and flooding in winter is the main problem here. In the case of the northern of the two footpaths, the horses and vehicles in the field plough up the footpath. The Parish Council should pursue this with the County Council, which owns the land, to see if anything can be done. A better bridge over Hatherley Brook would also improve this footpath.
5. For residents living north of the Fields, the access to the north corner of Lotts Meadow and to the Moorend Stream footpath could be slightly improved by a simple bridge across Moorend Stream where currently people have to jump across or else walk downstream to the footpath bridge.
6. For all access routes, it is worth considering whether residents could be encouraged to use the Fields from further away by cycling to the Fields and then walking or jogging.

The responses to question 5 show that many people greatly value the opportunity for exercise provided by the Leckhampton Fields. It is worth looking at ways to increase the benefits to health and fitness. Walking is certainly beneficial, but so also is more vigorous exercise. The Council looked recently with County Councillor Iain Dobie at the possibility of installing some outdoor exercise facilities on the Leckhampton Fields. This is worth considering further along with other ideas such as marking different walking routes and providing leaflets with distances, average walking time and calorie consumption for each route. Group walks of the sort recently organised by Leglag provide another good way to encourage people to use the Fields and particularly to make people familiar with the circular walks.

The route of the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk has six gates and two stiles. It would be good if the stiles could be replaced by gates in order to make the walks easier for those residents who might be cautious of climbing over stiles.

In winter, the flooding in Lotts Meadow deters some walkers and dog walkers. There are a few short stretches of footpath that are flooded and these could be dealt with by some simple walking boards. Elsewhere on the Fields, stepping stones have overcome the problems of mud near some stiles and this idea could be cheaply applied elsewhere. Several sections of the Cheltenham Circular Path are quite muddy in winter, particularly where the path passes the medieval moat and also west of Hatherley Brook as noted earlier. Some of the gates along the Cheltenham Circular Path can be very muddy or flooded in winter. The Council should raise this with the County Council.

Noting the use of the Fields by the Bethesda Scout Group, the Parish Council should look through the neighbourhood plan consultation at whether there are other youth groups to that might be encouraged to use the Fields. It is also worth considering whether it might be possible to improve facilities for picnics and barbecues and other activities by families and groups.

In the LGS consultation questionnaire, people were asked to give their views on the updated local green space and to say whether there is any other area currently included in the revised LGS that could be left out. No suggestions were made for any further areas to leave out of the LGS, but 32 respondents said that the Parish Council was wrong in reducing the LGS at all from what was proposed in 2013 and over 200 respondents commented on specific areas that they felt should not have been removed from the LGS. On White Cross Green, 88 respondents argued that there was too little amenity land included on the northern side for local residents and many respondents emphasised the importance of protecting the beautiful view of Leckhampton Hill from the Cheltenham Circular Path. Eighty-three respondents emphasised the importance of preserving the Northern Fields and smallholdings, if at all possible. Cheltenham's MP, Martin Horwood, was one of the respondents who argued that the Parish Council should consider putting the Northern Fields and smallholdings back into the LGS.

With regard to White Cross Green and the Northern Fields, some key points for the neighbourhood planning are:

1. To try to locate the amenity land on White Cross Green to preserve the view of Leckhampton Hill from the Cheltenham Circular Path as much as possible. This emphasises the importance of locating the amenity land at the north-east corner of White Cross Green since the fall of the land to the west makes it hard to preserve the view from that section of the Circular Path. Re-routing the Circular Path might also be a way to preserve the views better. Redrow in their planning application propose routing the Cheltenham Circular Path directly through the proposed development, which could be particularly bad, but other options are worth considering.
2. On the Northern Fields, it is important to preserve not only the southern smallholdings but also the strip of smallholding north of the footpath. If there were development on the Northern Fields, the design should also aim to retain some views of Leckhampton Hill from the A46. The view across the pig field at the corner of Kidnappers Lane and the A46 is particularly important.

3. The farm animals on the Leckhampton Fields are highly valued and one should conserve what remains of the 'city farm' on the smallholdings and try to restore the previous diversity, particularly by bringing back the pigs.

In question 4 residents were asked to say which features on the Leckhampton Fields they particularly valued. The specific feature valued by the least number of respondents is the old nurseries. This supports the Council's decision to exclude these nurseries from the revised LGS. Respondents also attach only medium importance to the smallholdings and this is consistent with excluding most of the smallholdings on the Northern Fields from the LGS. The medium to high importance attached to trees and orchards reinforces the need to ensure that any development on the nurseries/orchards site east of Kidnappers Lane preserves the trees including those in the old orchard. The point is made strongly in answer to question 7 that any development on the nurseries/orchard site must be very sympathetic and well screened given the closeness to the AONB and the potential damage to the view from Leckhampton Hill. This needs to be considered in detail in the neighbourhood plan and the planning policies need to be tightly defined in order to ensure that any development is appropriate.

Around 90 respondents comment on the social value of the Leckhampton Fields. Walkers and dog walkers on the Leckhampton Fields tend to greet each other and chat much more than they would do if they were walking in a park. This probably reflects the difference between country walking, where people normally greet each other even if they are strangers, and town walking where greeting and chatting with strangers would seem more out of place. Certainly people who frequently use the Fields, particularly dog walkers, are quite likely to form a social bond with other walkers. This social impact of the Fields deserves more thought and perhaps a little research. Given the general issue of loneliness, the question of how to create greater social cohesion is something that deserves being included in the neighbourhood plan questionnaire.

Although not really germane to the LGS, the issues of sustainability and particularly of traffic congestion were raised by many people. The neighbourhood planning needs to look at how to reduce the traffic impact of any development on the land that is not included in the LGS. One idea might be to put more emphasis on housing for retired people since this would add much less to the commuter traffic. This deserves further thought including the possibility of a garden village style of development on the Northern Fields.

Respondents provided a lot of information in their answers to questions 5, 6 and 7 and it took a great deal of time to amalgamate and précis the responses into the 154 summaries in sections 5, 6 and 7 of this report. Despite the effort involved in analysis, there is certainly a lot of value in including freeform questions because they give people more opportunity to express their particular views. The overwhelming message is how highly people value the Leckhampton Fields both as a local amenity and also for their importance to the views from Leckhampton Hill. Another strong message is the need for the neighbourhood plan to ensure that any development is appropriate and sustainable and the need for the LGS to protect the quality of the area.

The inclusion of the Leckhampton Fields as a strategic development site in the JCS has already led to developers and landowners doing deliberate damage, presumably with the aim of removing impediments to development. On the Central Fields, an old orchard has been cut down, footpaths blocked and mature trees destroyed. On White Cross Green

Redrow have heavily damaged the ancient hedgerows to deter wildlife and have chopped down a group of trees along Farm Lane where they want to put through a road. This underlines the need for the Fields to have permanent protection from development as LGS. The danger, however, is that developers and landowners might continue to damage the area in the hope of bolstering the opportunity for a future planning application. Under the LGS legislation, the responsibility for maintaining the LGS falls on the landowners. But they may not want to spend money on this if there is no realistic prospect of any development. So some other way may be needed to care for the area and ensure protection.

The problem of caring for open spaces is becoming an issue throughout the UK, particularly because austerity cuts are reducing the ability of County and Borough Councils to maintain open spaces and footpaths. In response, the National Trust has recently announced plans to focus much more effort on looking after and protecting parks and local green spaces, returning to its original founding charter to preserve important green spaces. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are another organisation that might help in looking after the Leckhampton Fields, particularly if the Parish and Borough councils could provide some funding. Another possibility might be to establish a 'Friends of Leckhampton Fields' voluntary group similar to the Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK) that plays such a huge role in maintaining the beauty of the Hill and Common. The key point is that it is not only important to preserve the LGS from development but also to preserve its special character, to maintain its network of footpaths and the other features that people so value, and to make the Fields even more valuable to the community.

## APPENDIX 1

### 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 (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 through 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.

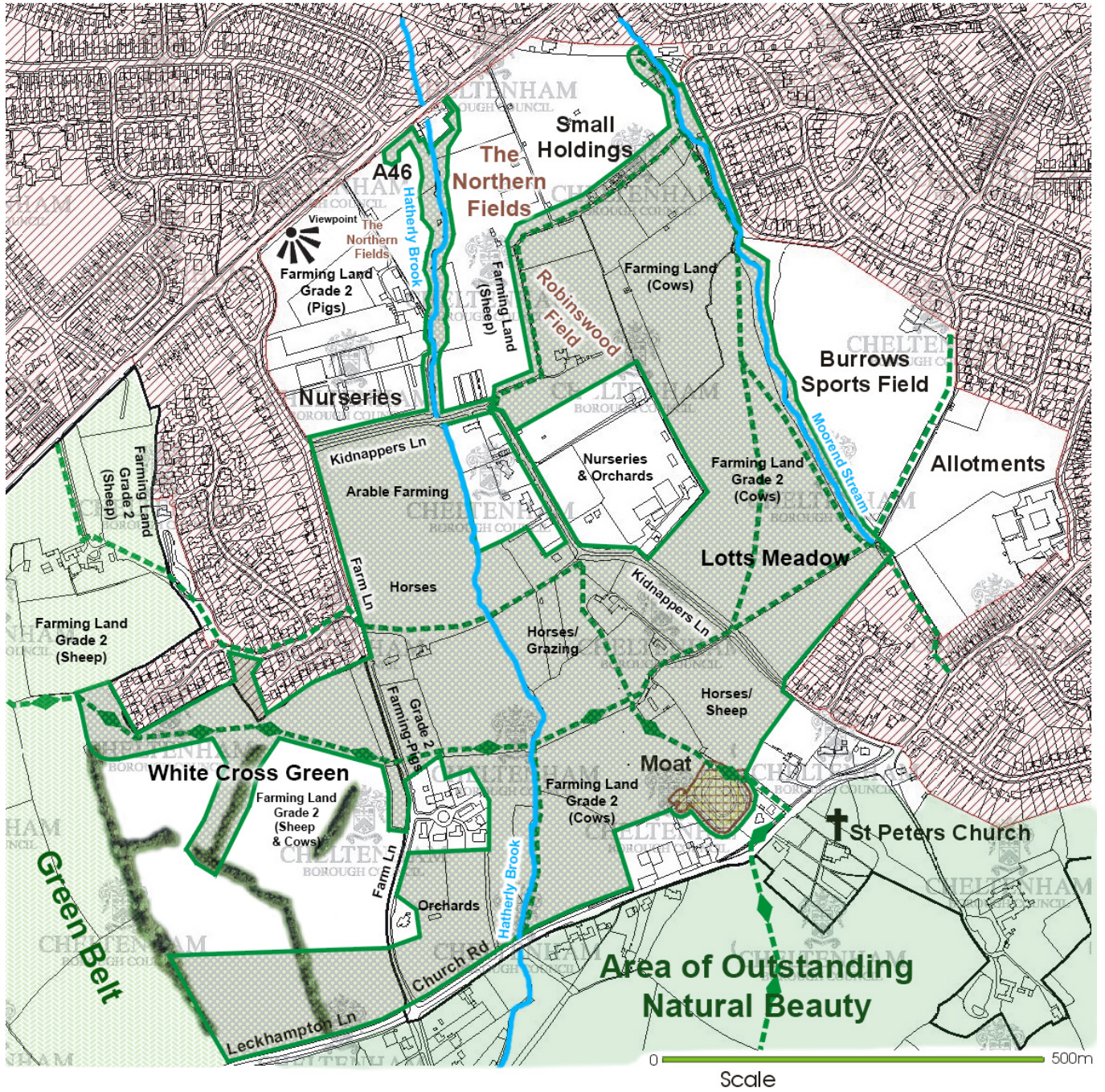
It is important to reinforce the caveats about retaining existing trees and screening. These do a great deal to soften the impact of any development, whether viewed locally or from Leckhampton Hill. The three developers, Bovis Homes, Miller Homes and Davis Homes, who produced the Illustrative Masterplan 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.





# LWWH Parish Council NPPF Local Green Space Boundary





## APPENDIX 2

### 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.