

Appleton with Eaton Parish Council
Comments to the Examiner following the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Phase

Examiner Comment	<u>AWE PC response</u>
<p>Policy 2: Local Green Spaces</p> <p>The Green Space Assessment is a very thorough document.</p> <p>I saw the significance of the three green spaces in the neighbourhood area during the visit.</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have any observations on the representation from the District Council on the proposed designation of land at Oaksmere/Fettiplace Close as a local green space?</p>	<p>Comments received during the pre-submission consultation led the Steering Group (SG) to reconsider the Green Spaces Assessment. As a result, the corner of Fettiplace was designated as a Local Green Space.</p> <p>During the Covid 19 pandemic, branches on a tree on Fettiplace were used to hang hearts where people could express their thoughts and feelings during this difficult time. This tree has been called the Tree of Hope.</p>
<p>Policy 3: Village Facilities</p> <p>I saw the significance and variety of the various community facilities as identified in paragraph 6.3 of the Plan during the visit.</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have any observations on the representation from the District Council on the details of the policy wording?</p>	<p>In discussion with senior officers from the Vale of the White Horse District Council it was agreed that, in accordance with the Council's comments, the wording of Policy 3, Village Facilities, should be more positive and have clear regard to current national policy and guidance. It was agreed that some slight changes to the wording suggested by the Council in their comments document would aid clarity and understanding. As such, provided that the Examiner is content, we would suggest that the first three paragraphs of Policy 3 should be amended to read:</p> <p>Proposals which will result in the loss of or significant harm to a village facility or amenity will not be supported unless:</p> <p>I. They would lead to the significant improvement of an existing facility, or the replacement of an existing facility with another which would be equally convenient to the local community it serves and which would provide equivalent or improved village facilities.</p> <p><i>And</i></p> <p>II. the facility is no longer economically viable for the established use, or there is a suitable and sustainable alternative that is located nearby, and</p> <p>iii. The facility is no longer required.</p> <p>The final clause, Clause iv, should be amended to read:</p> <p>iv. their design demonstrably respects the Village Character Assessment.</p>

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<p>Policy 5: Public Houses</p> <p>I saw way in which the two public houses were responding to the gradual relaxation of Covid restrictions during the visit.</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have any observations on the representation from the District Council on the details of the policy wording?</p>	<p>The Parish Council considers that the survival of the Plough Inn, the last remaining public house in Appleton (two others having closed in fairly recent times), is of vital importance to the community. This is a locally specific issue very strongly felt within the community particularly in light of 3 very recent planning applications to develop a large proportion of the pub's plot for housing. As such, the Parish Council wishes to ensure that the Plough is a viable and thriving business within the community so that a more restrictive policy is appropriate here.</p> <p>In December 2020 the Plough Inn was successfully nominated as an Asset of Community Value. There was overwhelming support from the community for the nomination.</p> <p>We have provided information used as part of the Asset of Community Value application, which was successful, in Attachments 1 and 2 to this document. These excerpts demonstrate the value of the pub to the community and the impact that would be felt if it were to be lost. The survival of the pub is a locally important issue that very much needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>Policy 6: Business Policy</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have any observations on the representation from the District Council on the details of the policy wording?</p>	<p>The Parish Council accepts the revised wording suggested by the District Council. Slight amendments agreed in discussion with the Council are highlighted in red. It was agreed that these amendments would aid clarity and understanding.</p> <p>As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals within Appleton to improve existing businesses and encourage new businesses will be supported where they are in accordance with the development plan and where they would not generate unacceptable harm to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The amenity of neighbouring properties; or - Highway safety
<p>Policy 7: Connectivity</p> <p>I understand the reasoning behind the first part of the policy. However, I am minded to recommend a modification to ensure that it has regard to national policy in general, and the</p>	<p>The Parish Council is happy to accept the Examiner's modifications.</p>

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<p>Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations in particular? Does the Parish Council have any observations on this proposition? Does the Parish Council have any observations on the representation from the District Council on the details of the policy wording?</p>	
<p><u>Representations</u></p>	
<p>Response 13</p>	<p>Membership of the Steering Group was addressed in the Terms of Reference approved by the Parish Council in July 2016. Volunteers were sought to become members of the Steering Group in 2016 and membership has been fluid since then.</p> <p>However, membership of the Steering Group has not been the only way to contribute too the development of the Plan. That development has been an open and public process in which all comments have been fully taken into account at all stages - as reflected in the Consultation Statement. The Plan was developed to reflect the views and aspirations expressed by the public but within the constraints imposed by district and national planning policy, particularly with regard to the Green Belt.</p>
<p>Response 14</p>	<p>The Parish Council is in discussions with Oxfordshire County Council with regards to an application for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) for access to the Thames Path. This is a separate process to the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>References to access to the Thames and the Thames Path in the Neighbourhood Plan reflect comments received from the public during the development of the Plan.</p> <p>With regards to the DMMO, the reference number is Ref: 03499</p> <p>OCC's DRAFT RECOMMENDATION as of the letter received on the 10th November 2020 was: All evidence available to the Council has been considered and evaluated and it is considered that: - I. There is sufficient evidence to support the application, and II. That a Definitive Map</p>

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	<p>Modification Order be made pursuant to the provisions of Section 53(2)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in consequence of an event specified under s53(3)(b) to add the route as Public Footpath</p> <p>There is not currently a ferry across the river at the bottom of Eaton Village to Bablock Hythe.</p>
<u>Responses to comments from the Vale of White Horse District Council</u>	
Ref 1, Page 9, paragraph 2.2	The Parish Council is happy with the suggested revised wording.
Ref 2, Page 12 – amenities	<p>Suggested expansion on “current circumstances”:</p> <p>The primary school is at the heart of the village. The pre-school closed in August 2020 owing to reducing numbers and Covid 19 restrictions. The sportsfield is located on the edge of the Parish</p>
Ref 3, Page 19 - Policy 2: Local Green Spaces	We are happy to re-number the list for the final document so that the numbering in the list and Policy match.
Ref 4, Page 19 – Policy 2: Local Green Spaces	<p>Comments received during the pre-submission consultation led the SG to reconsider the Green Spaces Assessment. As a result, the corner of Fettiplace was designated as a Local Green Space.</p> <p>During the Covid 19 pandemic, branches on a tree on Fettiplace were used to hang hearts where people could express their thoughts and feelings during this difficult time. This tree has been called the Tree of Hope.</p>
Ref 5, Page 21, Paragraph 6.3	See response to Ref 2 above
Ref 6, Page 23, Policy 3, Village Facilities	See response to Examiner comment on Policy3
Ref 7, Page 23, Policy 5, Public Houses	See response to Examiner comment on Policy 5
Ref 8, Page 27, Policy 6, Business	See response to Examiner comment on Policy 6
Ref 9, Page 29, Policy 7, Connectivity	See response to Examiner comment on Policy 7

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Attachment 1:

Q4 : Examples of how the nominated asset currently furthers the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational or sporting interests of the community?

1. The Plough Inn is last pub remaining in the village of Appleton and the pub and its gardens serve as vital meeting places for villagers, be they single people, couples, families, or groups, to come together.
2. The importance of the Plough is recognized in the Neighbourhood Plan for Appleton with Eaton. The plan contains a specific Policy (number 5) that seeks to protect the the Plough Inn (See Evidence V). The objective of the policy is *to protect the pub and to preserve its function as a valuable community asset for current and future residents.* (The Neighbourhood Plan is at the Pre-consultation stage having been delayed by Covid restrictions.)
3. The nearest pub to the Plough Inn is 1.5 miles away in Eaton village (The Eight Bells) and to get there you have to drive as the road between the villages is a dark, unlit country road with no pavement where the national speed limit applies.
4. The fact that the village has devoted a separate policy in our Neighbourhood Plan to protecting the future of the Plough, demonstrates the importance that villagers attach to having the pub at the heart of their village now and in the future.
5. The Plough Inn offers good accessibility for disabled people. It is possible to get into the pub or the gardens in a wheelchair as everything is on one level. The outside toilets have wide doors and are large enough to accommodate a wheelchair. They have not been fully adapted for disabled use by the current owners but could be so adapted.
6. Evidence X is a photo album that captures many scenes from the Plough and its gardens over the last 5 years. It shows many different villagers and groups of villagers coming together for meetings and events, having fun, sharing stories, taking on a challenge, whilst offering mutual support and enjoying a drink and sometimes the home cooked food. The photos paint a powerful portrait of the pub as a hub at the centre of village life.

Social Wellbeing

7. Villagers of all ages can call into the Plough and know that they will be welcomed and there will be someone there to chat to. It is the only place in the village that is open for villagers to call into, for many hours each day, 6 days a week. There can surely be no better way to further social wellbeing in a community.
8. There are many groups that gather at the Plough on a regular basis, as evidenced in the testimonials that we are attaching with this application. We consider that the Plough plays a

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vital role enabling all of the following groups maintain the social wellbeing and welfare of many villagers:

9. The Thursday Night Group of men that gather each week to share a few beers, exchange views and most importantly offer mutual support to each other. The group has a long (40 year) history of meeting in the Plough as it has always provided a welcoming local space for this group to gather. The group continues to meet every week and as John Rowe states in his testimonial (Evidence E) the group is most important for the '*mutually supportive network*' it provides. John Evans in Evidence F describes more of the background to this group describing it as an '*entirely self sustaining unstructured friendship group.*'
10. Elizabeth Gilkes' testimonial explains that after monthly Parish Council meetings and after other meetings, parish councilors retire to the pub for a drink. Once the formal meetings are over, it is a time for some relaxed conversation and the opportunity to discuss wider issues and sometimes, to catch up with fellow villagers. (Evidence L)
11. The Plough has long been the venue of choice for school meetings, as described by Sophie Willis's testimonial. Her letter also explains how Parent Committees regularly met there, and she highlights the fact that *she meets with a group of friends and their children in the pub throughout the year, especially on Friday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes*. Families gathering in a safe space where children can run and play, whilst adults relax is vital to the wellbeing of families in a community.
12. The organisers of Appleton Scouts meet around 7 to 10 times a year in the Plough according to Richard Tyack's testimonial. Scouts are a vital service to the young in the village and having a central venue for the committee to meet, plan and discuss the Scout group is an essential part of ensuring the social wellbeing of the young people of the village.
13. Sara Withers' testimonial (Evidence K) explains how the Friends of Jubilee Park use the Plough for their monthly meetings. Jubilee Park is the village playground which requires regular and active management from the committee to keep it safe and properly maintained. Hence the Plough plays a key role in enabling this popular children's facility to be properly managed.
14. The Plough is used at least 2 or 3 times each year as a central venue for funeral gatherings, enabling mourners to gather and support each other at a difficult time. Families appreciate being able to hold the reception in a local venue close to the village church of St Laurence's, Appleton.
15. There is a 4.30 club that gather at the Plough each Friday evening for a couple of hours. The group meets every week and mainly comprises people who work in the building trade who try to finish the day at an earlier time on a Friday. Andrew Gibbs testimonial (Evidence O) describes the benefits to the group of these regular gatherings.

Cultural

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16. The Plough is a heritage asset in the heart of the Appleton's conservation area. It has a long history of providing the venue for all manner of village celebrations and events and that cultural heritage would be lost forever if the village were to lose the pub.
17. Appleton is famous for its church bells and bellringers. Every Friday evening, for as long as anyone can remember, the local ringers have practiced their art in the church tower, after which they descend on The Plough frequently joined by visiting ringers. Appleton bells are special and have always attracted visiting ringers from all over the country. When they visit to practice on our bells, they almost always retire to the Plough, joined by local ringers to share experiences and offer mutual support to each other.
18. Roger Mitty's testimonial (Evidence B) also explains how over a whole weekend in March each year, ringers from all over the country gather at the Plough in a time honoured fashion. This celebration recently marked its 200th anniversary with village wide events and parties.
19. The Plough is also the venue that Appleton's thriving History Group retire to after their monthly meetings. John Page's testimonial (Evidence C) explains how the Plough has been used as the base for the archaeologists, visiting volunteers and village volunteers to gather during the weekend exploratory digs in the village. So far, there have been 18 such weekends held in Appleton. This society and the archaeological digs have brought many villagers together and provided them with a new interest in the village's history, as well as new friends.
20. The Plough has long hosted successful village quizzes in the pub. They are often held on Sunday evenings and there is usually standing room only. The quizzes have raised thousands of pounds for village and local charities and have brought villagers together for a very social evening. See Nick Wither's, our long- standing quizmaster's, testimonial (Evidence H) on how the quizzes have brought together villagers, old and new, young and old in a convivial atmosphere.
21. A more recent addition to the groups that gather at the Plough is the Appleton Ukulele group. The group started in the autumn of 2019 and, after stopping during lockdown, resumed in the pub garden over summer 2020. For social distancing reasons, the group cannot meet at the moment but they wait eagerly to return to the pub for music, singing and laughter. See Mary Carey's testimonial (Evidence I) on this new group.
22. Toby Blackwell's testimonial (Evidence Q) summarises the absolutely key role that the Plough has at the heart of village life. *'It is a hub for its regulars, casual visitors, local clubs, and groups of every kind'*.
23. Paul Golding (Evidence S) is another villager who has enjoyed the Plough in many ways over many years and continues to do so, noting that his son is now able to similarly benefit from the social interactions that a village pub offers.
24. John Adams testimonial (Evidence T) represents the experience that many villagers will have had regarding the Plough. When his children were at the village school, the pub offered a central meeting place for *'social interaction and support'* as well as a springboard for various

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challenges and events. Over the years, John has attended numerous meetings at the Plough and used the pub as a venue after football, choir or simply to meet friends.

Recreational

25. Aunt Sally is a traditional Oxfordshire game with teams usually based around local pubs. The Plough always hosted a team until approximately 4 years ago when the then landlord, failed to support the team and the group reluctantly broke up. The current landlord, who took over the tenancy in May 2019, had assembled a list of interested players with the intention of the Plough rejoining the league in 2020. Phil Neale's testimonial (Evidence D) explains that a Plough Inn team had been entered into the local league for 2020 but sadly Covid19 has halted all play this year.
26. Aunt Sally teams, which typically comprise 8 players, bring men, women, the young and the old together. Hence when 2 teams play, this results in both a great deal of socializing as well as welcome takings for the bar.
27. The current landlord installed a pool table a few months ago and it is regularly enjoyed by villagers, especially the younger ones. Games like this and darts are a great way for people to relax and forget about the stresses of everyday life.
28. The rear garden at the pub has play equipment that children have enjoyed over many years. The landlord who left in 2019 did not maintain it but up to 2018 and from 2020 onwards, this has made the garden a brilliant meeting place for families. Children can play safely whilst parents and friends enjoy a drink and sometimes a meal too. The large garden means that often the slightly older children end up having impromptu ball games on the grass. Sophie Willis's testimonial (Evidence N) refers to her regular meetings with friends and their children at the pub, on Friday evenings and Sunday lunchtime.
29. Sarah Stacey's testimonial (Evidence P) eloquently explains how the Plough enabled her to make friends in the village and how this lead over the subsequent 9 years to her using the pub in a variety of ways: Friday early evening gatherings in the garden providing '*crucial support to mental health after being at home all day.*' The pub garden continues to bring families together, the gatherings providing an informal support network for parents and active outdoor play for children and young people in a safe space.
30. Sarah also explains how the Plough can be a wonderful place for anyone on their own to pop into with a good book, or to work, even if it is likely that you will be '*drawn into lively chats with a wide variety of people*'. The pub is the only such space that is available for villagers to simply pop into in order to meet up with other villagers.
31. Andrew and Claire Salmon's Testimonial (Evidence R) identifies the value that having somewhere you can go in the village where '*you will bump into someone to have a chat with or, if you are by yourself, you can join a group*'.

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32. A more recent addition to the groups that meet at the Plough is the Morning Social Group described by Laura Olver (Evidence M(a) and M(b)). The group was set up to develop a support network for Mums, Dads and younger siblings of children in the village school.

Sporting

33. The Plough has long been the venue of choice after many sporting matches, club sessions and practices, as described below.
34. Appleton Tennis club is a very vibrant club within a short walk of the Plough. Club nights are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and nearly always a group of 4 to 6 tennis players will, after they have finished playing, descend on the pub for a couple of drinks, and a catch up with their friends. See Adrian Willett's testimonial (Evidence G) for details of the annual tennis club events held at the pub – the presentation evening, the AGM, the Club Christmas Meal and the Tennis Club Annual Barbecue are all held at the Plough.
35. Appleton Cricket Club regularly use the Plough after their midweek nets sessions and after each home game, Roger Gilkes' testimonial (Evidence A) describes how the home and away teams retire to the Plough for a beer or two and chance to both review the game and socialize. The cricket club also use the Plough as the place they hold their committee meetings and their AGM.

Local Economy

36. The Plough regularly receives great reviews on Trip Advisor demonstrating how well thought of the pub is by the local community and by visitors to the village:
37. *'Local village pub that has reignited village community since they took over as new owners a few months ago.'* (July 2020),
'Lovely classic local pub. Fantastic Sunday lunch and the service was excellent will definitely be going back' (February 2020)
- See further Trip Advisor reviews in our Evidence U
38. The pub offers a vital service to campers at the local Barefoot Camp site. It is very common for families camping there to use the pub for meals and drinks whilst they are staying at the campsite. The Plough Inn is a facility that attracts more campers to use the site that is run by a local farming family.
39. Trip Advisor review 2020 *'We were staying at the campsite nearby and had such lovely food on the Friday night that we returned again on Saturday'*

A NOTE ON COVID RESTRICTIONS

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40. The Covid lockdown and subsequent restrictions have clearly placed a significant burden on all pubs. The regular support of various individuals and groups that regularly met at the Plough has been able to resume for some groups but not yet for all. Clearly the limited number of people who can meet and the fact that some people need to take much greater care, means that some of the groups and activities below have resumed after lockdown eased and some have not yet been able to resume. The absolute hope is that every group will eventually be fully able to return to their former full enjoyment of the Plough.

SUMMARY

41. The Plough Inn, with its wonderful gardens and car park, has been at the centre of Appleton life for centuries. The many and varied ways in which the pub is currently used by villagers has been detailed above, fully describing how the pub and its gardens furthers the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational and sporting interests of the village.

Attachment 2:

Response to Question 5: Concerns about the impact on the village if the pub were to be lost:

1. The Plough Inn, including its car park and gardens, is and must remain a vital part of Appleton. As set out in the testimonials attached to this application The Plough furthers the social wellbeing and social interests of an array of different groups and individuals who together make up the Appleton community. It is an essential element of Appleton's diverse and unusually cohesive social fabric.
2. Should The Plough be lost the local social benefit which it provides would be impossible to replicate. The Plough is the only remaining pub in Appleton. As Julian Blackwell says, it is a hub for regulars, casual visitors, local clubs and groups of every kind. Customers learn from each other, discuss village problems and how they can help.
3. The strength of feeling in the community about the value and importance of the pub and its garden was demonstrated by the response to the three planning applications and planning appeal lodged between 2017 and 2019. Objectors were clear about the potential impact of the proposed development on the viability of The Plough and were extremely concerned that The Plough should continue in business

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as a valuable community asset. The 2017 application for permission to build on the pub garden led to 58 villagers lodging objections. The first 2018 application attracted objections from 84 villagers; the second 2018 application drew 130 objections - (because of the protracted nature of the application/arguments some villagers sent in 2 objections to this application at different times.) The Appeal against the planning refusal generated 64 objections.

4. The testimonials which accompany this application reflect the variety of non ancillary uses of The Plough and its garden by its customers and the way in which the pub furthers the social wellbeing and interests of the community, be they cultural, recreational or sporting. As stated by Sophie Willis, it is the very lifeblood of the village. Adrian Willett explains how the pub adds to the cohesion of the community, bringing together Appleton's diverse villagers in the only place where this can happen. This leads to important links being formed between Appleton's many community organisations as explained by Richard Tyack. It cannot be overemphasised how important The Plough is to Appleton life. It is a neutral venue where groups like the Ukelele players, Aunt Sally players and quizzers can walk to meet, enjoy musicmaking or recreational games and eat and drink in sociable surroundings. Similarly, it is the only venue where the village's several sports teams, bellringers, charitable and volunteer groups can conveniently meet as well as hold those vital village quizzes, annual celebrations and events. The many testimonials from members of all these groups provide ample evidence to demonstrate how important The Plough is to the array of cultural, sporting, charitable and recreational activities in Appleton.

5. Equally – or perhaps even more important are the social benefits that The Plough provides. John Rowe and John Evans from The Thursday Night Group explain how important the pub has been and continues to be for its members, providing an unique space where, for over 40 years, they have put the world to rights and most importantly, supported one another through life's challenges. Phil Neale makes similar points. Sophie Willis and Andrew Gibb explain the importance of the pub to their social lives as young parents and busy working people.

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- 6.** Loneliness is a curse in modern society. As emphasised by Claire Salmon villagers who live alone feel able to walk in and feel reasonably confident that they will see a friend with whom they can have a drink or a meal. Similarly, Paul Golding, as someone who now lives alone during university term times, explains that the Plough is where he and others go for social interaction whether spontaneous or planned. Sarah Stacey makes powerful points in explaining the importance of the Plough for her as a single parent. That sort of social support is without price and only works in a community environment.

- 7.** The Plough's customers use the pub and its garden to meet friends and family and as an irreplaceable part of the life of Appleton's extraordinary array of clubs, charities, societies and groups. Without the Plough the social cohesion that makes Appleton the very special place that it is would be gravely threatened. The last word goes to John Evans, an Appleton resident for more than 40 years, when he says that the loss of such a communal asset would degrade much of the special quality of Appleton's village life.