

## ***Representations***

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations made by:

- Landan Homes (Response 8);
- Frances Dudley (Response 9);
- Lagan Homes (Response 13/14);
- Bloor Homes (Response 15); and
- Dijkman Planning (Response 16).

EHPC: Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

### ***In respect of response 8:***

The representation is submitted on behalf of a developer (Landan Homes) by Carter Jonas. The representation discusses several aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Comment is provided separately to the Representation statements about Settlement boundaries in the response to the clarification for EHNP2.

There are various statements made which challenge aspects of the draft plan. We aim to respond to the key points rather than all aspects, and do so under 2 main categories:

- a) Local Green Space**
- b) Wider aspects**

In general, there would seem to be much opinion, there are also some statements and assumptions which appear to be inaccurate.

#### ***a) Local Green Space***

The representation focuses on 3 parcels of land within the proposed LGS site B which are under the same ownership, these are parcels 2,4 and 5, as shown in Appendix D. Each of the parcels of land subject of the representation are part of the Letcombe Brook green corridor and together with 3 other parcels form the area proposed as LGS site B. The land includes various Public Rights of Way and open green space, there are also views both along the course of the Brook and across the green space. The LGS is enjoyed by the community being located alongside the Brook and being part of the village pathway network.

The footpaths within site B follow the Brook and traverse the green spaces linking up with other areas of the village. The setting is both tranquil and green, within a verdant landscape which is accessible on foot from the village hall and shop. The 3 parcels which are the focus of the representation are located either along or close to the Letcombe Brook (a rare chalk stream being a priority habitat, with associated flora and fauna). Consequently, the parcels are within an area of high biodiversity value, forming an essential element of the nature and character of this part of East Hanney and are an important feature of the village as a whole. This area of the village is demonstrably special to the local community as evidenced within responses to the Community consultation and within the Character assessment. It qualifies as Local Green Space on a number of counts as set out within Appendix D of

the Neighbourhood Plan. The parcels of land are enjoyed because of their setting close to the Letcombe Brook, the richness of wildlife evident within the area, and green landscape, offering the experience of tranquillity, in close proximity to the established historical part of the settlement and within 5 minutes' walk of the community it serves.

The representation proposes that land which lies to the West of Bath House, Snuggs Lane, and land west of East Hanney should be allocated for development. We do not propose to allocate this or any other site for development as part of this Plan for the reasons set out in the Plan, particularly as East Hanney already has sites allocated under the District Development Plan.

The representation suggests that development at the suggested location which is within the vicinity of the Letcombe Brook would increase biodiversity and habitat creation, it is difficult to envisage how this could be achieved considering the richness of the biodiversity and habitat which prevails. The area is valued for many aspects including its wildlife which are diverse and include rare species. Evidence of wildlife which inhabit these areas is provided within Appendix D of the Neighbourhood Plan, and referenced in Part 3 of Appendix A. Also noting that the banks of the Letcombe Brook are a recognised breeding area of the water vole, Britain's most endangered species which are subject of a breeding programme in this vicinity. The area is frequented by otter, Kingfishers, egrets, owls, hedgehog, roe deer and muntjac. The grass lands providing habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna.

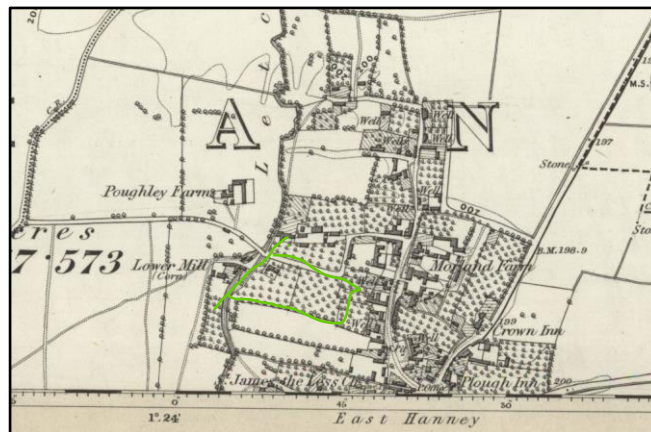
- Various statements in the representation are seemingly made to seek to rebuff qualification of the land as qualifying LGS. We contend that the parcels qualify on a number of counts and are core LGS, substantially meeting the criteria and fully complying in all respects with the requirements for designation. The parcels forming the core part of the proposed LGS area B.

Because of the location alongside the Brook, the green environment and presence of footpaths which link parts of the village, as well as the other qualities detailed in Appendix D, site B is an LGS that is important to and for the character and nature of the village, which is enjoyed by and is special to the community.

- For each of the qualifying aspects discussed in the representation we would suggest that evidence contrary to the case for qualification is not substantially provided.
- At 1.10 the Representation claims that the land 'lacks the necessary evidence...for its identification' but does NOT evidence this. Instead, simply states that they believe there to be an overlap in existing policies and 'therefore there is no need for the site to be identified as a LGS'.
- In various of the statements some admittance of the existence of respective qualifying values is acknowledged. Thus, it is clearly the case that the qualification criteria as set out in Appendix D of the Plan documents is present and met.  
Where this arises, the argument within the representation takes the alternative tactic of 'there being no need for the additional protection of designation as a LGS'. For example, this is cited at 5.4 and in 7.0. This approach strongly illustrates that site B qualifies as a LGS and is therefore able to be designated as an LGS under the Plan.
- Specific aspects that are questioned include:
  - Reasonable proximity to the community – it is self-evident that the parcels of land clearly are in close proximity to the community that is served, as can be seen on a map of East

Hanney and by the network of footpaths. The LGS is within 5 minutes' walk of the community it serves.

- The statement within the Plan relating to access by the community – there is access both by the various public rights of way, and also through the definition of access as defined within the Cotswold tool kit.
- Views across and from the area. At 5.10 the case is put that the views for the land to the west of Bath House and Land west of East Hanney are only subject to private views and argue 'that it is difficult to understand how a private view is in the public interest'. – We disagree as both public and private views of the area are important, the area providing a green and natural vista, which is also an important aspect of the landscape and character of the village.
- At 5.15 there is argument presented about the area of ancient orchard which forms part of site B. Below is an extract from the orchard map of East Hanney of 1883 showing that part of site B (boundary highlighted in green) was formerly fruit orchard, the trees that remain can be seen in parcel 1 of site B. This supports the significance of the area.



- 5.19 Discusses the beauty and amenity value stating that the area is 'pleasant' and effectively acknowledging that it has the qualities of tranquillity and quietness. But argue that it is not unique and therefore not demonstrably special. We strongly disagree, the area is demonstrably special as evidenced within the Community survey and statements within the Character Assessment.

When also considering the location central to the network of footpaths which have served the village historically, the position next to a rare chalk stream, and with the richness of wildlife, tranquilly, and the green landscape, close to the village so that it is within 5 minutes' walk of the community, the area is clearly unique and demonstrably special.

- 5.20 Discusses the Richness of wildlife, which the representation does not deny. This is an area of very rich biodiversity and habitat, with a range of flora and fauna including rare and protected species. Evidence of wildlife that inhabit the areas is provided within Appendix D, and that which relates to the Letcombe Brook and its environment within Appendix A. The area clearly meets the criteria of being 'demonstrably special to the local community and holds particular local significance because of its richness of wildlife'.
- 5.24 Accepts that the Letcombe Brook is of particular biodiversity value but proposes the area for development. The brook and its environment extend beyond the water course and includes the surrounding landscape which in this area is an important breeding ground, wildlife habitat, and wildlife pathway. We do not see how the high biodiversity value of the area can be protected by development. We also consider that any

development in this vicinity would not conform with District core policies relating to biodiversity, proximity to water courses, trees, landscape and character.

It is noted that the representation states that development would be avoided close to the brook 'at least the area covered by plot 6'. Plot 6 is owned by the Parish Council!

No development can take place under District policies within 10 meters of the banks of a river course including the Letcombe Brook which is recognised in the District Development plan as having special status as a rare chalk stream.

- At 7.1 and 7.2 there is recognition of the value of heritage assets, and the biodiversity value of the area.
- 5.7 to 5.9 Discusses public rights of way, and states that 'it is accepted that site B has PROW on it' but then seek to argue that there is no need to designate Local Green Spaces to protect public rights of way. Whilst discussing the existence of the PROW's at 5.16 the representation confirms that site B has recreational value.
- The area is clearly of recreational value as the PROW's are commonly used and referenced within the Character Assessment and the Community Survey as being aspects of the village that the community most enjoy. The paths along the Letcombe Brook identified as one of the top 3 most important aspects, carrying a score of 1.5 based on a measure of 1-5 (with 1 being the highest score ref page 6 of the Community Questionnaire Report). This high rated score demonstrates that the area is important to the community which it serves.
- At 5.38 the representation suggests that LGS site B is an extensive tract of land the statement is not substantiated. The most recent version of the NPPF (Sept 2023) provides the conditions and requirements for designation of Local Green Spaces when making a Plan, which is set out in para 101 and 102, there is no specified definition of what constitutes an extensive tract of land in this regard. Therefore, the statement made regarding site B as an extensive tract of land is unsupported and is refuted.
- The representation also quotes the comments made by the District Council regarding the cumulative size of the LGS spaces in response to the draft policy at Regulation 14. For example, at 5.37 it is noted that at Reg 14 the District suggested that further consideration should be given to the extent of the majority of the LGS designations. This was acted upon and certain of the areas proposed for LGS designation were removed from the draft plan and all others were reassessed with some including area B reduced in size.
- The collective size of proposed LGS spaces is now considerably smaller than that previously proposed at Reg 14.
- At 6.3, 6.4 and at 7.7. it is suggested that because of the LGS proposals and their view of a need for land at the outer edges of the village for further growth, that the Plan does not meet basic conditions. This is strongly refuted, the District Council being able to allocate land at sites at the outer edges of the village should they decide as allowed for under EHNP2. Reiterating, also that the areas of LGS have been significantly reduced, those that remain are minimal compared to the size of the Parish, and amendments have been made to meet the District recommendations.

Site B is proposed because it meets the criteria on multiple counts as set out in appendix D and not just because of a singular aspect and is an area which is demonstrably special to the community.

## **Other points relating to the representation concerning LGS;**

- The representation makes various statements about a suggested area for development described as 'Land to the west of Bath house, Snuggs Lane and Land west of East Hanney'. Certain of the statements regarding perceived suitability are worthy of comment and features of the site which deem it unsuitable for development noted:
  - The supporting documents for the Development Plan Part 1 include the SHLAA which provides an assessment of land areas. The 'Land to the west of Bath house, Snuggs Lane and Land west of East Hanney' is described in the SHLAA as 'Land at Medway' with reference EHAN02. Its suitability for development (developability) states 'Site is unsuitable due to proximity to Letcombe Brook and Flood Zone 2 & 3'.
  - Access, particularly for motor vehicles. It is very difficult to imagine suitable access for motor vehicles to this area and contend that there are 'no other routes (other than Hall Lane) suitable for cars. We do not see how either Snuggs Lane or the Medway could practically provide access for a housing development.  
The strip of land shown extending toward the Medway is only wide enough for foot traffic and the area at the point of access to the Medway is owned by the Parish Council. Snuggs Lane is privately owned by a number of parties. Access from Snuggs Lane leads only to parcel 4 through which various of the PROW'S converge. At the end of Snuggs lane (which seems to be a suggested point of access), the land narrows to a single pathway with a double set of footpath styles. It is difficult to contemplate how vehicular access could possibly pass through a private road which at its end narrows into a popular and well used public right of way, which itself as it passes into parcel 4, is crossed by a further public right of way. There is also a heritage asset property located immediate to the left of the PROW at the end of Snuggs Lane. Any development of a roadway for vehicular movements in this area of sensitive habitat would be at odds with various of the District core policies (including but not limited to DP31, DP36, CP45, CP46).
  - Proximity to and impact on the conservation area is also a constraint.
  - The area is subject to flood at certain times of the year, and this is effectively acknowledged in the representation with statements given about the need for Flood Risk mitigation. The SLAA identifying the area as being in flood zones 2 and 3.
  - The area is of biodiversity value and has sensitivity as a wildlife habitat, with the location close to a rare chalk stream.
  - Any development in this location would have a significant and adverse impact on the character of this area and thus an intrinsic impact on the character of East Hanney for the reasons as set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents.

### ***b) Wider/other aspects***

- From 8.0 the representation discusses the proposed development and states their view of various aspects of the draft Plan. Certain of the statements made seem to be based on assumptions made within the representation which would appear to be erroneous. For example, in relation to the development at North of East Hanney (known as Ashfields Lane application P21/V0376/FUL) which the representation seems to assume relates to the whole site. In response it should be noted that the application was presented by the developer as Phase 1 for that site.

We would also reiterate that there are housing sites allocated for East Hanney which are set out within the District Plan.

The reasons for not allocating additional sites in the NP are set out within the Neighbourhood Plan documentation and include the fact that sites are already allocated within the District Plan.

- There is a challenge to the approach which the EHNP has taken toward ensuring planned development.

The plan has been developed in line with the regulations and conforms with the NPPF.

The Neighbourhood Plan allows for development within the settlement boundary and from allocated sites which should the District determine may be outside of the boundary, thus enabling development to be on a planned basis in appropriate and suitable locations. The District Council has not raised any issues in this regard.

It is also the case that the EHNP works with and is in general conformity with the policies of the Local Development Plan and will be subject to the policies of the future Joint Development Plan.

We therefore do not agree with the statements made regarding the wider aspects of the EHNP.

The Plan has been developed over a period including responding to District guidance and in liaison with members of the District Neighbourhood Planning team, it has been developed with advice, and through the correct channels and processes for designations. The plan has been amended to take into account changes recommended by the District Council and other consultees. The Neighbourhood Plan itself consequently being in general conformity with the policies within the Development Plan for the area of the authority.

The basic conditions are met and the draft Plan conforms with NPPF requirements.

***In respect of response 9:***

The representation is made by the owners of parcels of land which form part of the area proposed as LGS site B. The representation is the same as that which was previously submitted for the Regulation 14 Consultation. Following the earlier Regulation 14 Consultation comments received were reviewed and changes made to the draft plan including to the Policy for Local Green Space. The extent of LGS proposed within the Plan is now materially reduced, some of the areas previously proposed removed and certain of the areas that remain reduced in size including site B subject of this response. We thank the owners for their response and have with advisors taken the comments received into consideration.

We would comment in response to various of the statements within the representation as follows:

- In the context of the green corridor and pathways which link parts of the village along the brook, the parcels of land in the proposed site B are we consider to be in the core of the village,

particularly as the site includes various Public Rights of Way which link and extend out from the central parcel (that links into Snuggs Lane, links with footpaths along the brook to the recreation ground and shop, and links to the footpaths that lead to Main Street, and also towards the area of Ebbs lane).

- The location of site B is central to the village being part way between the lower part of the existing settlement and that towards the most northeast extent, the settlement having a generally longitudinal shape. It is also central to the village from a footpath connectivity perspective as there is a meeting of public rights of way within the area, which links different areas of the village as described above.
- There is a feeling of openness when using the local footpaths, such as when looking from the footpath that enters Snuggs lane across the green landscape towards the rear of the Meads and also along the line of the Brook. We agree that there is a backdrop of green vegetation which provides a specific characteristic of the area, but there is also an open view through the area towards this. We agree that there is a feeling of openness provided by the view to the west bank of the brook, but this is not the only aspect of openness that can be enjoyed by the community from this area. For example, Appendix I Key Views includes at X3 the view from Snuggs Lane which is over unimproved grassland with open skies.
- Comment regarding Parcel 5. Whilst there is natural hedging there are views from the footpath between the brook and the Medway. There are also views across the area from the footpaths in parcel 4 particularly from the PROW that runs from the end of Snuggs Lane and links to the footpath alongside the brook toward the Iron Bridge. The views also change with the seasons, the green backdrop and the grassland particularly during spring and summer, as well as the winter views evidence its scenic value and importance to the character of this part of the village. Images are provided within Appendix D of views and wildlife recorded within area 5.
- Comment about flooding. Representation 8 which is submitted by a developer's agent in respect of the same parcels of land reference flood mitigation needs. This representation 9 also discusses the wetness of the ground. The SHLAA identifies the land as flood zones 2 and 3.
- Comment about parcel 2. Only part of the parcel is proposed as LGS being that which is close to the PROW which runs alongside the Brook and is therefore visible. Land close to Cross Tree House is not proposed as part of the LGS.
- Comment regarding the wildlife corridor. A letter is presented on page 34 of Appendix A from the Letcombe Brook project which helps explain the importance of wildlife corridors and identifies that the Letcombe Brook links local wildlife sites along its corridor. The Letcombe Brook corridor has also been highlighted in the Nature Recovery Network draft plan as a Recovery Zone. Images of wildlife commonly seen within parcel 5 are shown in Appendix D.
- Comment regarding the number of responses from the Community survey in respect of Site B as a LGS in the Neighbourhood Plan. A study has taken place and qualifying support for this policy and in respect of this location evidenced. The table at the top of Page 39 of the Community Questionnaire Report summarises the responses received which were relevant to areas within East Hanney. There are 79 responses, of these 29 were in respect of the Hanney Gap (quoted as land between East and West Hanney) part of which is in West Hanney and therefore not part of this Plan. Thereafter, as identified in the comment, 17 were in support of areas which are in LGS area B.
- Comments in final paragraph of the Representation:
  - The size of the village is much larger than the total size of the proposed LGS areas.

- Provision of LGS within the Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with local planning and sustainable development recognising and designating qualifying space as part of the process when making a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the NPPF.

We are grateful for the comments and confirm that they have been considered.

***In respect of response 13:***

The representation is submitted on behalf of a developer by Stantec. The document gives reference to a site which they wish to see developed for housing which is adjacent to the settlement boundary. The site is stated as being 3.7ha with capacity for circa 100 dwellings. However, other than that there is little detail to give comment on.

The District Council together with South Oxon have recently completed a call for sites exercise as part of the development of a Joint Local Plan (JLP). Allocation of a site of this size to a village of the nature, character and size of East Hanney would have significant impact particularly on infrastructure, services, community and way of life. Having recently experienced a doubling in the size of the village in terms of both population and dwelling numbers, together with that already recently experienced this would surely represent a massive over development of the village.

The submission also gives considerable reference to the impact of the Abingdon Reservoir proposals which are of concern to the village and the wider impacts that it may have on the future of this area. It notes at 1.14 that the NP has raised an objection to the size of the reservoir and its impact on microclimate and flood risk. The Parish Council, the District Council and the County Council has separately made extensive and detailed substantial objection on a considerable number of other reasons, the concerns are therefore not limited to those noted. The sheer vastness of the proposed reservoir, and extent of adverse impact from its construction on both the local landscape and environment as well as on the lives of the community that would arise give considerable concern. Within the draft Plan some statements are provided regarding potential provision of leisure areas, cycle and footpath connectivity, and green buffers for consideration should the reservoir be taken forward. The extent of planning that will be required for the village to give protection from the reservoir works and from its impact on the landscape is both dependent on whether the reservoir proceeds, its actual location and its size including height and capacity, all of which are matters of concern. During the course of this examination SERSO has made a further announcement about their intentions to progress with the reservoir and to do so at a maximum size. If this is taken forward it will have extensive impact on the whole area and surrounding settlements including East Hanney. Consequently, the importance of providing sufficient buffer and leisure areas to seek to mitigate the impact on the village is essential. As is the consideration of the risks and detrimental consequences that the reservoir could have on East Hanney.

We thank Stantec for their representation. This has provided opportunity to outline concerns further and reiterate considerations set out in the draft plan, in light of the decisions published by SERSO during the course of the examination.



***In respect of response 14:***

The representation is submitted by a developer and gives reference to a site which they wish to see developed for housing. The representation specifically addresses the policies relating to Settlement Boundary EHNP2, Coalescence EHNP4 and EHNP 8 Housing density. Comment has already been provided regarding this representation in relation to the Settlement Boundary as part of a separate clarification.

The representation is generally positive and notes that the policy wording in relation to EHNP2 has been amended to allow for further sites to be allocated in any Local Plan review. In respect of EHNP4 they consider that that the proposed site whilst in the area identified as the 'Hanney Gap' would not conflict with policy EHNP4.

A supportive response to policy EHNP8 is noted, the representation stating they 'welcome the changes to Policy EHNP8' The response is positive about the policy 'which provides greater flexibility as it no longer specifies maximum densities'. Adding that this is more reflective of national and local planning policy'.

We welcome the support for this policy and the supporting final statements which state that:

'The revisions to the Neighbourhood Plan are welcome and we are grateful to the Neighbourhood Plan Group for taking on board the earlier representations made'. And 'As a consequence of those changes, subject to some minor caveats, we are generally supportive of the Neighbourhood Plan'.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group has sought to be responsive to comments received and representations made and has worked with the District and our advisors to develop the policies within the Plan to both meet the needs of the community and provide a deliverable plan for the future of the village. We are grateful for the comments and positivity of this representation.

***In respect of response 15:***

The representation is submitted by a developer and gives reference to a site which they wish to see developed for housing. Some comments are provided in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan, but the point is made that the statement is provided principally to ensure that the District and Parish Councils are aware of the developer's involvement in the site. Consequently, the comments are limited and focus on:

\*Local Green Space: The developer's interest is in land which includes area F. The table presented in the representation addresses and either contends or gives elements of agreement to aspects of the qualification criteria. A main argument stated against the area as an LGS is in respect of access, but it is noted that it is agreed that part of the site includes the public right of way reference 198/15/20 which crosses the site. The statement also confirms that the site includes a woodland but contend the extent of views. However, it is the case that the site gives extended views across the lowland vale including from the PROW. The representation does accept that boundary trees and hedgerows add to the green buffer to the village edge, but disagree with other aspects including whether the area is demonstrably special to the local community or holds particular significance, reasons as to how these aspects are met is provided within Appendix D.

In response to a separate comment provided by the District Council further consideration of this site has been made and subject to the recommendation of the Examiner this site 'F' may be removed from the Plan as a LGS under EHNP8, the space being located away from the Letcombe Brook green corridor and to the east of the A338.

\*Housing Density: Draft policy EHNP10 provides for housing development to be at a density which accords with that of the surrounding area in order to help ensure (together with design and materials) that the character of an area is maintained and thus will not have an adverse effect on the character of an area. As East Hanney is a rural location with a density of housing lower than 30 per ha, developments which are at a higher density than that of the village would have impact on the character of this historic and rural settlement. A benefit of the policy being to enable new development to integrate into the surroundings of its location and not adversely affect the character of an area. The policy fully accords with Core policy 23 which has specific provision for housing to be at a density of less than 30 dwellings per hectare(net) where local circumstances indicate that this would have an adverse effect on the character of an area, highway safety or the amenity of neighbours. A separate response is also provided in respect of this draft policy as part of the clarifications.

\*Housing Mix: We have no further comment in respect of the suggested change in policy wording and have already provided a separate response in respect of this draft policy as part of the clarifications.

In light of the absence of comment on any other of the policies, we assume that the plan is generally supported and give thanks for the representation which has provided opportunity to give some clarification.

***In respect of response 16:***

The site to which the representation relates is LGS site A and focuses on the basic conditions for qualification. Appendix D of the Neighbourhood Plan addresses each of the conditions and states how in each of the qualifying aspects the conditions are met. The site was formerly subject of a housing application reference P15/V1616/FUL which was refused and appeal reference APP/V3120/W/16/3142562 which was also refused. That application was for a larger area of which the proposed LGS Area A was a part. The various ecological, biodiversity, arboreal and historical aspects of the area being of value recognised in the planning process, there being various reports submitted by relevant specialists within District Planning including by the ecologist.

A large part of site A is identified as area EHAN05B within the supporting documents to the Development Plan, the SHLAA (Appendix 8 East Hanney). EHAN05B is described as 'Undeliverable'. This is the land to the east side of the area. The balance being part of an area shown in the SHLAA as EHAN05A.

Very recently (September 2023) an application for development of the barns which are within the site was refused by the District on multiple grounds, application reference P23/V1147/FUL.

We have the following comments in response to various of the statements made:

- **Veteran fruit trees.**

The ancient orchard and existence of fruit trees is factual. The trees produce good quantities of fruit annually. As noted above a separate independent arboriculture assessment was

submitted by the Parish Council to the District which evidenced the value of the trees which as veteran fruit trees have protection. The District forestry team and ecologists are aware of the presence of the trees. In response to the recent application P23/V1147/FUL the forestry officer noted that there were trees on the site.

A photo which shows at least 4 of the fruit trees in bloom is at figure 22 on page 42 of Appendix A of this Plan.

The area is a traditional orchard BAP Priority Habitat site.

The ecological value of species in the area is of importance.

Amongst the reasons for refusal of the recent application P23/V1147/FUL (reason 4) which states: – ‘Insufficient information submitted to demonstrate that the development, and its construction would not harm trees on or adjacent to the site which contribute to the rural visual amenity and ecology of the area.’

It is clearly the case that the area comprises of the site of an ancient orchard with veteran trees which provide fruit and are recognised as being an important aspect of the rural visual amenity and ecology.

- **Historic Significance.** It is the case that the area is of historic significance, the very statement quoted within the representation itself identifying the potential site of an early watermill and roman and saxon remains.

No comment is provided in the representation about the early settlement aspects referenced within Appendix D, which give weight to the importance of the area being one of the earliest settled parts of East Hanney. The space is also of historical interest agriculturally having been known to have continued to be farmed organically until as late as the 1990’s.

The statement quoted referencing that there are no known heritage assets is incorrect, there being old barns ‘Mill Orchard Barns’ located toward the northern most part of the area which are of historic interest. A report on the barns undertaken by the Oxfordshire Building records group identified the structures as a ‘heritage asset of considerable significance having evidential value of poor farming life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century’. The buildings evidence some rare features and are referenced within Appendix D.

It is also true that the site is located in close proximity to the grade 2 listed mill and the conservation area which give value to the setting being in a historical context. The area therefore has evidential grounds for being of local historic significance. The historical context and setting also being important relevant to the local character.

- **Significance in terms of beauty**

The representation is dismissive about the significance of the beauty of this area which is unique because of the culmination of factors which together differentiate it and give it uniqueness. The aspects which distinguish it from the rest of the countryside which surrounds the village are:

- Location alongside the brook directly opposite the county wildlife site.
- The richness of wildlife which is proven and evidenced through records including those at TVERC and as submitted on page 37 of Appendix A
- The presence of veteran fruit trees
- Its setting alongside the brook and adjacency to the historic mill and backwater of the brook.

-The richness in biodiversity which is evident and a feature of the association of the area with the rare chalk stream. The environment of the chalk stream attracting a richness in flora and fauna which is not present in the rest of the countryside other than in the vicinity of a rare chalk stream.

- The fact that the area was historically organically farmed until the early 1990's and has only been used for sheep grazing since, means that the grasslands are potentially unimproved permanent grasslands. Which is one of the rarest habitats that remain in this country.

-Noting also that the county wildlife site and the area of the proposed LGS were once joined by a farm bridge over the Letcombe Brook and farmed organically.

The area can clearly be seen and enjoyed from the footpath which runs parallel with the southern part of the area, (by the brook through the county wildlife site), from the entrance point on Summertown, and from the track by the mill.

- **Recreational value.** Its recreational value lies in its beauty and rarity, being able to be enjoyed by the community using the footpath alongside the brook, and from the other viewpoints.
- **Tranquillity.** The representation is dismissive of the tranquillity of this area which for the combination of reasons which make it unique and help give it importance. It is worth noting that the diversity of wildlife recorded in the area including rare and protected species gives weight to the case of tranquillity.
- **Richness of wildlife.** The representation is dismissive without providing any cohesive argument or having recognised the weight of evidence submitted supporting the importance of the area for wildlife within the Neighbourhood Plan. The area is rich in biodiversity and has 2 priority habitats (chalk stream and banks, and veteran orchard), as well as being a recorded refuge for rare and protected species.  
The richness in biodiversity which is evident is a feature of the association with the rare chalk stream.

Of particular reference in evidence of the importance of this land for wildlife is the diversity of wildlife recorded which is shown in the table on page 37 of Appendix A. The table was compiled from a survey taken at the site. Evidence is also provided through the records at TVERC. Further, the Letcombe Brook project together with BBOWT and the support of the Environment Agency are monitoring rare and protected species within the vicinity of this location. Evidence of rare or protected species include water vole burrows on site, ref water vole survey August 2014 and, Otter Survey by Letcombe Brook Project and BBOWT 2014, and recent photo evidence, as stated on page 38 of Appendix A.

Responses to the recent planning application P23/V1147/FUL reference that there is a colony of breeding water voles within the proposed LGS which are protected in planning terms, evidencing the importance of this area for wildlife.

A reason for refusal of that application included 'insufficient information to demonstrate that the development would not harm the ecology and biodiversity of the site and wider area in relation to priority habitat, protected species, and the Letcombe Brook chalk stream water course'.

- **An extensive tract of land.** The area of the site is small and contained it is clearly not an extensive tract of land being calculated at only 2 ha in size.

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the statement submitted. There is clear evidence that the site meets the qualifying criteria on a number of counts.