

To the Wokingham Borough Growth and Delivery Team (Local Plan Consultation)
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From Edwin Trout, Chair of the Earley Environmental Group (EEG)

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Draft Local Plan Consultation - Local Green Space Designation

I am writing on behalf of the Earley Environmental Group (EEG) in response to the Draft Local Plan consultation on the Borough Council's proposals for the designation of Local Green Space. The EEG has around 270 members with the joint interest of protecting and improving the natural environment of the Earley area.

We are disappointed to see that the Borough Council's proposals for the allocation of Local Green Space designation currently amounts to only eight sites across the whole borough. Of these only one lies within the Earley area. The inclusion of local green space designations within the Local Plan will provide an important opportunity to help ensure that many of our valued green areas, woodlands and parks are protected from unwarranted development. This is particularly important for urban areas such as Earley where development has removed much of the natural wildlife habitat and open countryside, leaving pockets of valued woodland and parkland.

Given the government's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, we would expect policies relating to the restoration and protection of natural habitat to receive a greater emphasis within the new Local Plan. Furthermore, the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the designation of land as a Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. We would therefore expect the Borough to designate many more green areas as Local Green Space within the Local Plan, including within Earley.

We are aware that Earley Town Council wrote to the Borough in March requesting that 11 additional sites be given local green space designation. The EEG supports the Town Council in its request. The EEG has, however, undertaken its own assessment of the green spaces within the Earley area and has taken an approach that both encompasses the Town Council's proposals and enables many local green spaces to be combined to form Green Corridors and Green Routes within and across the area. Our assessment has highlighted how important it is to designate such areas as Local Green Space and thereby provide extended wildlife habitats and recreational facilities for the benefit of the residents of Earley and neighbouring areas.

The EEG's proposed green areas for Local Green Space designation is as follows:

1. Thames Riverside Green Corridor
2. London Road Green Corridor
3. Bulmershe Green Corridor
4. Sol Joel Park Open Space
5. Reading University Campus Open Space
6. Meadow Park Open Space
7. Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve Open Space

8. Redhatch Copse Open Space
9. The Thames Water Reservoir Open Space off Elm Lane
10. Chalfont Park and Woods Open Space
11. Pearman's Copse Local Nature Reserve Open Space
12. Lower Earley Meadows and Woodlands Green Corridor
13. Lower Earley Events Field Open Space
14. Rushey Way Green Route.

The EEG's assessment of each of these sites is given in the Table below. The assessment has been based on the criteria for the designation of Local Green Space status used in the Borough Council's Topic Paper 'Local Green Space' dated January 2020. We have not confined our assessment to green areas within Earley but have extended into adjacent areas in order to complete corridors and routes. The EEG's approach demonstrates the need for innovation in creating Green Corridors within urban areas and for the Borough to formally identify, adopt and protect the following locations as such:

- **Thames Riverside** running the extent of the river between Kennet Mouth and Sonning Bridge, including LGS09 in WBC's Topic Paper;
- **London Road** green area running along the southern side of the A4 London Road between Shepherd's Hill Roundabout, the A3290 Roundabout and The Drive;
- **Bulmershe-Highwood** green area running between Reading Road and the A3290; LGS07 within WBC's Topic Paper;
- **Pearman's Copse** running north of Lower Earley Way (West) between Beeston Way and Shinfield Road; and
- **Lower Earley Meadows and Woodlands** running alongside the River Loddon and the eastern and southern boundary of Lower Earley between Loddon Bridge (at Wokingham Road) and Danehill.

Similarly, we contend that the **Maiden Erleigh Local Nature Reserve** together with its adjacent playing fields and green spaces should be designated as a combined area, including LGS06 within WBC's topic Paper. **Redhatch Copse**, which was formerly owned by Reading University, as well as the **Reading University Campus**, which includes The Wilderness and The Harris Gardens, are important spaces for local residents and should be designated as Local Green Space. Our assessment also shows that **Sol Joel Park, Chalfont Park and Woods, Meadow Park and the Lower Earley Events Field** have an important local status and should also be designated. Besides these, we have identified green areas along **Rushey Way** and at the **Thames Water Reservoir** site off Elm Lane that need to be designated as they provide urban wildlife habitat areas and recreational space.

Maps showing the approximate location of the EEG's proposed Local Green Space designations are attached.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Faithfully,

Edwin A.R. Trout

Chair, Earley Environmental Group

Local Plan Consultation 2020: Earley Environmental Group (EGG) Designation of Local Green Space Assessment

	Proposed Local Green Space	Description	WBC Assessment Criteria		
			a) in reasonable close proximity to the community it serves	b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife* <small>* for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field)</small>	c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land
1.	Thames Riverside Green Corridor	The Green Corridor running along the southern side of the River Thames between Kennet Mouth via Broken Brow and Thames Valley Business Park to Sonning Bridge, including the Thames Valley Park Nature Reserve	Located in close proximity to the Reading, Earley, Woodley and Sonning urban areas	A special and historic riverside area and wildlife habitat, providing open recreational space, river views, the Thames Valley National Trail and National Cycle Routes 4/5; and inter-connecting routes to Reading, Earley and Sonning urban areas and the Waterside Centre and Thames Valley Nature Reserve. Forms a green corridor between the railway and urban area at Newtown	Forms a unique riverside/floodplain setting along the River Thames off-setting the impact of the edge of the Reading urban area and Thames Valley Business Park with woodland and a Nature Reserve
2.	London Road Green Corridor	The Green Corridor running along the southern side of the A4 London Road between, the Shepherd's Hill Roundabout to the A3290 Roundabout and the green triangle at The Drive	Located in close proximity to the Earley and Woodley urban areas	An important corridor of green land sitting within the urban environment providing a haven for wildlife and an important visual foil against the impact of the A4 strategic route	An unusually wide green corridor forming a special feature along this section of the urbanised A4 where it enters the Greater Reading urban area.
3.	Bulmershe Green Corridor	The Green Corridor running between Reading Road and the A3290, including Bulmershe allotments, Bulmershe Park and Fields, Highwood Local Nature Reserve and allotments at	Serves Earley and Woodley urban areas, schools and university facilities	An important large-scale open space sitting between the Earley and Woodley urban areas, providing a variety of key recreational, educational and allotment facilities. Bulmershe fields include a community orchard and Highwood	Provides a valued mix of locally important and linked recreational facilities, open green space and ancient woodland whilst

		Earley.		provides tranquil walking areas and wildlife habitats and contains botanical specimens from the 19th century grounds of Bulmershe Court and a rare local example in Berkshire of heather heath. At Highwood, the Corridor links to the South Lake green space and wildlife habitat	encompassing school playing fields and leisure facilities; sitting between an extensive urban area offering habitats for wildlife and a degree of remoteness. This area forms the green belt between the Earley and Woodley urban areas
4.	Sol Joel Park Local Green Space	Local park located north-east of the junction of Wokingham Road and Church Lane	Serves the Earley and Woodley urban areas.	Provides recreational, sports and skateboarding facilities, children's play area and walking links within the local urban area	An attractive tree-lined parkland of historic significance to Earley bordered by the railway and the urban area, including St Peter's church
5.	Reading University Campus Local Green Space	The Reading University Campus green areas and lakeside, including the Wilderness and The Harris Gardens (partly in Reading Borough)	Serves the University's students, visitors and local residents	Has historically provided public access to open wildlife-rich green spaces, lakeside and woodland walks featuring; the special botanical nature of The Harris Gardens, including National Collections of plants; and the historical landscape value of The Wilderness, including the rock amphitheatre at the head of the lake, remains of an ice-house and nearby Grade II-listed Cold War bunker	Long established university campus environment comprising new and historic buildings, ancient woodland and gardens
6.	Meadow Park Local Green Space	Local park facilities located between Roman Way and Meadow Road	Serves the Earley residential area	Recreational and playground facilities, outdoor gym and gardens with areas set aside for wildlife and memorial trees within the local residential area	Urban park with play facilities and flower beds set tightly within the urban area

7.	Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve Green Space	The Nature Reserve and Lake, including Laurel Park playing fields, the green triangle at Radstock Lane, the land to the east of Maiden Erlegh Lake located behind the play park/sports pavilion and public greenway from the eastern end of the woodland to Gypsy lane	Serves the Earley and Lower Earley urban areas	A special local ancient woodland and lake providing rich landscape value, wildlife habitat and recreational space for walking, jogging and sporting activities, including; the Laurel Park Football Club and Fun Days; a contained green space east of the lake behind the play area for young person groups, such as the Earley Elfin, to meet in; a Community Orchard; and green links to the local urban area, such as Silverdale Road shops, Brookside Surgery and Earley Station	Ancient woodland and lake of historic significance to Earley's development offering a degree of remoteness from the immediate urban area
8.	Redhatch Copse Local Green Space and Wildlife Corridor	Woodland located off Redhatch Drive, including the connecting wildlife corridor running between Radstock Lane via Chalfont Way to Rosemary Avenue	Serves the Earley urban area	Ancient woodland providing woodland wildlife habitats and woodland walks connecting to a green route linking the woodland to local urban area	Attractive woodland formerly owned by the University of Reading and providing an important green space between local urban developments
9.	The Thames Water Reservoir Local Green Space	Local green space incorporating underground Thames Water Board facilities, located off Elm Lane, Earley, behind Whiteknights Primary School, including the green space along Elm Lane	Serves the western Lower Earley urban area	Provides a local green amenity and wildlife habitat connecting local walking routes including along and across Elm Lane	Unique green space housing water pumping facilities underground
10.	Chalfont Park and Woods Local Green Space	Local park, scrubland and woodland located north of Rushey Way and west of Chalfont Way	Serves the Lower Earley urban area	An important local green space located within the western urban development of Lower Earley providing local recreational space, children's play area, walking/cycle routes to the nearby school and shops, and valuable wildlife habitat at Chalfont Woods	Urban park with play facilities and flower beds set tightly within the urban area

11.	Pearman's Copse Green Corridor	The Green Corridor, including Ryhill Park running north of Lower Earley Way (West) and the M4 between Beeston Way and Shinfield Road, linking to green routes along Rushey Way	Serves the Lower Earley urban area	A mix of recreational space, meadow and woodland habitat bordering the Lower Earley urban area forming an important green barrier between the development and the M4	Unique urban woodland environment providing a green route, wildlife habitat and protective edge for an extensive urban area
12.	Lower Earley Meadows (Riverside Park) and Woodlands Green Corridor	The Green Corridor running along the eastern and southern boundary of Lower Earley between Loddon Bridge at Wokingham Road and Danehill, including the green spaces and woodlands alongside the River Loddon and playing fields, such as at Paddick Drive north of Lower Earley Way, as well as Sindlesham Meadows south of Lower Earley Way and Memorial Park at Sindlesham	Serves the Lower Earley urban area	This substantial green corridor is an important recreational facility for the residents of Earley, providing playing areas, a skateboard park, walking routes, woodland habitat and riverside views along the River Loddon; extending across Lower Earley Way to open countryside at Sindlesham. It forms a natural barrier between the urban development and the M4 and provides a rich habitat for wildlife	Forms a special riverside/floodplain setting along the River Loddon off-setting and providing a degree of remoteness from the impact of the edge of the Earley urban area and the Lower Earley Way/M4 routes to the south
13.	Lower Earley Events Field Local Green Space	The recreational green area and former 'carnival field' located at Maiden Place off Kilnsea Drive	Located within the Lower Earley urban area	Provides a local green amenity, recreational area and children's playground connecting local walking routes	Urban park with play facilities set within the urban area
14.	Rushey Way Green Route	The green routes running along the southern side of Rushey Way between Moorhen Drive West and Beech Lane, and between Chatton Close and Beeston Way	Serves the Lower Earley urban area	Woodland strips providing a walking/cycling route and local wildlife habitat also form a natural boundary between Rushey Way and the houses to the south and linking to Pearman's Copse	Important local green routes linking to the routes within the urban environment BC/17/6/20 v3