

**Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on Tuesday 28 April 2015 at 8 pm**

**Present:** *Councillors B. Franklin (Chairman); K. Baker; T. Barker; J. Cheng; R. Duncan; K. Gilder; C. Lawley; D. Mills; R. Neall; S. Outen; S. Rahmouni; D. Smith; D. Stares; M. Walker*

**Officers present:** *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Service Support Manager; L. Matthews, Committee Officer*

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all Members for the time, energy and effort they had given during their time on the Council. He noted that Councillors Challis, Cox, Downes, Duncan, Higgs, Outen, Rowland and Storry would be retiring at the end of this term of office and thanked them for their dedicated service to Woodley, with particular thanks to Councillor Rowland, who had served for 22 years, and Councillor Challis, who had served for 10 years.

77. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors A. Chadwick, P. Challis, N. Cox, A. Downes, K. Haines, L. Higgs, M. Holmes, E. Rowland, W. Soane, M. Storry and M. Willson.

78. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Outen	Agenda item 5 Capital Programme	Personal – Councillor Outen's wife is an allotment tenant
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Councillor Outen did not participate in the discussion or the vote regarding the 2015/16 Capital Programme

79. **DRAFT FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Members considered the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee at a meeting on 14 April 2015 (minute number 107) that the draft Financial Regulations be approved.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the Financial Regulations as presented to the meeting.

80. **RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND RISK REGISTER**

Members considered the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee at a meeting on 14 April 2015 (minute number 109) that the Risk Management Strategy for 2015/16 be approved.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the Risk Management Strategy for 2015/16 as presented to the meeting.
- ◆ To note receipt of the Council's Risk Register as at March 2015.

81. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Members considered the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee at a meeting on 14 April 2015 (minute number 114) that the Capital Programme 2015/16, amended to include expenditure of £600 to purchase scalplings for use in repairing the roadways at the Reading Road allotments site, be approved.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the Capital Programme 2015/16, amended to include expenditure of £600 to purchase scalplings for use in repairing the roadways at the Reading Road allotments site. **(Appendix A)**

82. **SITE OF URBAN LANDSCAPE VALUE (SULV) JOINT WORKING PARTY**

- a) Members considered the terms of reference for the SULV Joint Working Party, as recommended by the SULV Joint Working Party Terms of Reference sub group. It was noted that the map attached to the terms of reference to identify the extent of the SULV included an area in the south east corner that was not part of the SULV.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the terms of reference of the SULV Joint Working Party, as attached at **Appendix B**.
- b) Members considered correspondence received from Earley Town Council regarding an interim statement, which could be used to support objections to any planning application that threatened the SULV and that may be received before the working party had completed its work.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the interim statement, as attached at **Appendix C**.
- ◆ That the interim statement should not pre-determine the work and conclusions of the SULV Joint Working Party.
- ◆ That the interim statement should be in place only until any recommendations of the SULV Joint Working Party were accepted by Earley Town Council and Woodley Town Council.

Meeting closed at 8:15 pm

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CAPITAL PROJECTS	Allocation (£)	Status	Comment	Works Required
Signs	1000		Annual Allocation	Replacement, new signs, fire signage and new entrance sign for Woodford Park
Seats	1000		Annual Allocation	Replacement/additional seats - annual allocation
Litter bins	300		Annual Allocation	Replacement/additional bins - annual allocation
Dog bins	200		Annual Allocation	Replacement/additional bins - annual allocation
Pathway repairs	2000		Annual Allocation	Repair work to council pathways - annual allocation
Playgrounds	5000	Rolling Fund	Annual Allocation	Annual allocation - Improvements to play areas - new equipment
Woodford Park car park resurfacing	5000	Rolling Fund	Annual Allocation	Repair & resurfacing - annual allocation to fund
Replacement roof WPLC	5000	Rolling Fund	Annual Allocation	Replace old asbestos roof - estimated cost £35,000. Old roof leaks patched but deteriorating.
Committee Rooms - WPLC	621	C/F from 2014/15		Install window blinds. New flooring and decoration was completed 2013/14.
Dividing Curtain - Sports Hall WPLC	1000			Replace old curtain to match new installed last year. To increase functionality/flexibility of room
Youth Shelter	1500			Replace wooden roof and refurb
Boiler Replacement WPLC	12000			16 years old so at end of life span, only running at 70% efficiency compared to 97% on new boilers significant gas wastage (see separate report)
Water Softener WPLC	2500			Install water softener to decrease limescale damage to heating and water system
Football Wing Ceilings	2500			Replace ceilings in football wing and remove asbestos as appropriate
Bowls Club Fencing	4500			Removal old damaged railing and replace with 6' weldmesh fencing system. Tree roots have damaged the path and are beginning to damage the green and the irrigation system. Removal of trees to be funded from tree works budget
Fork Lift Attachment for Tractor	1500			Reduce manual handling of bagged soil/dressing etc which is currently offloaded on delivery, reloaded onto trailer and offloaded at site by hand (x600 25kg bags - 2-3 deliveries per year.
Chapel Hall - replacement flooring	7250	C/F from 2014/15	Works complete- awaiting invoice	Replace current flooring - poor condition
CCTV WPLC	394	C/F from 2014/15		Upgrade CCTV system
Ventilation - Ladies & Gents toilets - WPLC	2644	C/F from 2014/15		Install extractor ventilation in Ladies & Gents toilets - WPLC
Changing Room refurb - WPLC	2390	C/F from 2014/15		Replace flooring, decorate, refurbish bench seating
Ladies Toilets - refurb - WPLC	3000	C/F from 2014/15		Refurbish toilets - new toilets, taps, decoration
Replace hot water tank - WPLC	9200	C/F from 2014/15		Old tank badly scaled, inefficient, causing problems with system
Water Storage Tanks - Chapel & Coronation Halls	1400	C/F from 2014/15		Cleaning of cold water storage tank at Chapel/Coronation, vented lid required at Chapel
Function Room Windows - replace - WPLC	4870	C/F from 2014/15		Replace function room windows
Water Softener - Oakwood Centre	3300	C/F from 2014/15		Install water softener to decrease limescale damage to heating and water systems caused by hard water.
Road Plantings - Allotments	600			Purchase or road plantings for repair of roadways around the site. Works to be carried out by allotment tenant volunteers.
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>80669</b>			

ROLLING FUNDS	Total in fund (Estimated)	Project Cost
Woodford Park car park resurfacing	30000	60000
Replacement roof - WPLC	10000	35000
Playground Equipment	10000	60000

<b>FUNDED BY</b>	
Carry forward balance from 2014/15	63935
2015/16 allocation	45000
Total funds available 2015/16	108935
<b>Capital Programme Balance</b>	<b>28265</b>

Resurfacing and repair of car park substructure. 5 years allocation	60000
Replace old Asbestos Roof with steel roof	35000
New Play Equipment - Woodford Park (Rear of Oakwood Centre)	60000

**Bulmershe Site of Urban Landscape Value Joint Working Party  
Terms of Reference**

**Reporting arrangements**

The joint working party will report to Earley Town Council and Woodley Town Council.

**Overall purpose**

To protect the Bulmershe SULV, as currently defined in the Wokingham Borough Council MDD DPD and as shown on the attached map (Appendix A), from development.

**Membership of the working party**

2 members from Earley Town Council, with one named substitute.

2 members from Woodley Town Council, with one named substitute.

There will be a maximum of 4 voting members at each meeting.

The quorum will be 3 voting members.

Officers from both councils will be in attendance at all meetings

**Meetings**

The joint working party will meet at least once in each municipal year.

Other meetings will be arranged as necessary.

**Terms of operation**

To define and maintain a joint statement on reasons for the Bulmershe SULV to exist.

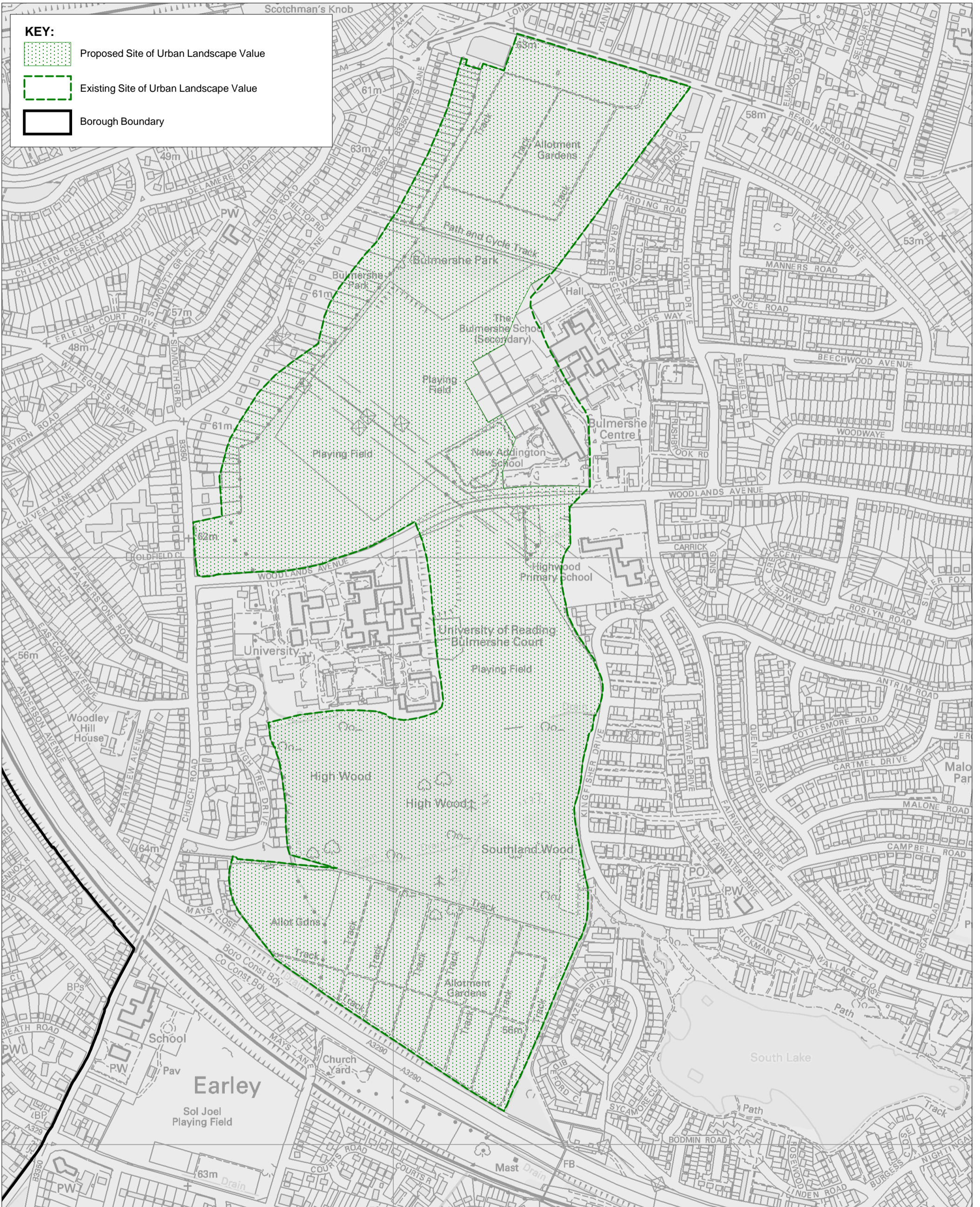
To review all existing policies in place to protect the Bulmershe SULV.

To propose joint submissions regarding planning policy, at the appropriate times.




To propose joint submissions regarding planning applications which have the potential to impact the Bulmershe SULV.

# LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Map 311 - Amend Site of Urban Landscape Value at Bulmershe, Woodley defined in policy TB22



**KEY:**

-  Proposed Site of Urban Landscape Value
-  Existing Site of Urban Landscape Value
-  Borough Boundary



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Scale 1:6,000 at A3

## **BULMERSHE SITE OF URBAN LANDSCAPE VALUE**

### **Interim Statement**

Earley and Woodley Town Councils are unanimous in the view that national and local planning policies should be used to protect and if possible enhance the status of the area of the Bulmershe Site of Urban Landscape Value (SULV). The extent of this SULV is defined in the MDD DPD. The two Town Councils have consistently striven to try to ensure that this green gap between the two settlements is maintained. Yet again, however, there was disappointment at the recent decision of the Local Planning Authority to grant Planning Permission for a development which would further encroach on to this area, despite the designation afforded to it of a Site of Urban Landscape Value and following the most recent consultation on the MDD DPD when the importance of protecting this area had again been highlighted.

Unfortunately, the two Town Councils failed in their attempt to have a Local Green Spaces Policy, as described in National Planning Policy Framework sections 76, 78, 79 and 80, included within Wokingham Borough Council's new Local Plan (the MDD DPD) and for Bulmershe SULV to be re-designated as a Local Green Space to enhance its protection.

The joint Working Party constituted to submit this request to the Borough Council is currently being reconstituted to look at various other ways in which the area can be better protected. However, in the meantime, there is concern that the Bulmershe SULV could suffer further encroachment before the Working Party is in a position to consider what other measures might be introduced to protect it.

Therefore the two Councils have agreed this interim policy statement until such time as the SULV Working Party is reconstituted and is fully operational.

It is demonstrated below that previous planning and development management policies have not been adequate to protect the area currently designated as the Bulmershe SULV and that a different protection is therefore appropriate.

The SULV policy in the previous Local Plan has been undermined. Wokingham Borough Council has failed to recognise the shortcomings of this policy which has led to the erosion of the Bulmershe SULV.

Developers have been able to argue that some development can take place within the area of the SULV and Wokingham Borough Council has accepted their argument.

The following approved plans are cited as evidence of the lack of protection

- i) Addington School (ref F/2006/8099)
- ii) Goals Soccer Centre (ref F/2006/9350)
- iii) Pitts Lane Development (ref F/2010/2104, App/X0360/A/11/2148730)
- iv) Reading University Development (ref O/2012/0155)

The developments i), ii), and iii) were approved despite lying within the boundaries of the 1996-2004 Local Plan SULV policy area.

The boundaries of the Bulmershe SULV were shown in the proposed MDD DPD submission published on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Development iv) was approved on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013. When the final version of the MDD DPD was approved on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014, the boundaries of the Bulmershe SULV had been altered to accommodate this development, resulting in the loss of playing fields from the edge of the SULV.

Taken collectively these applications have eroded the area through encroachment and also introduced urban paraphernalia and floodlighting at its edge. This clearly indicates that the existing SULV policies have been given little weight in the planning decisions. The existing policies have demonstrably failed to protect the area designated as a SULV and harm has been caused to the landscape value and the local open space of Woodley and Earley.

It is contended that the public value attached to the land within the Bulmershe SULV is significant and that this value has been recognised by Wokingham Borough Council in past local plans and the MDD DPD by the inclusion of a SULV policy.

Historically there has been a lot of local public pressure from both residents and residents' groups, such as the Association of Central Earley Residents, to recognise the value of the Bulmershe area as a green lung shared between the western edge of Woodley and the north of Earley.

The value of the Bulmershe green area has long been articulated by Earley and Woodley Town Councils and was subsequently recognised in The Wokingham District Plan 1996-2004, which established the Bulmershe area as a Site of Urban Landscape Value, drawing on policies in the Berkshire Structure Plan (1991 to 2006). Although the area of the SULV has been modified in the new MDD DPD a similar protection has been included.

General - Section 3.102 of the MDD DPD acknowledges that this area is open and undeveloped and provides an important contribution to local character and amenity.

Section 3.104 of the MDD DPD establishes that the area forms part of the setting and identity of the settlements of Earley and Woodley. The Bulmershe SULV area is an open space with features such as ponds, mature woodlands and hedgerows and has a role as both formal and informal open space. Green spaces, along with their recreational and biodiversity roles in a built-up context, should be retained or enhanced as they bring health and wellbeing to the local community. [Local Authorities have recently been made responsible for improving the health of their local population see Local authorities' public health responsibilities (England) 13 March 2014 SN06844 as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012].

Beauty – Highwood is a fine example of mixed lowland woodland with an attractive heath land area too. The open views offered by parts of the Bulmershe SULV, within an otherwise urban landscape, offer the beauty of a semi-natural landscape that has historically been recognised as a Site of Landscape Value.

Historic Importance – Much of the area formed part of the grounds of Woodley Lodge and Bulmershe Court that has historically provided a degree of protection. Highwood contains exotic tree species, which were once part of an arboretum - a collection of trees - in the grounds of Woodley Lodge. These include giant redwoods and monkey puzzle.

Recreational Value – There are a range of formal and informal recreational uses

i) Allotments – there are allotments at the north and south ends of the Bulmershe SULV.

ii) Informal recreation – there are many opportunities for informal recreation within the Bulmershe SULV, such as walking, kite flying, picnicking etc

iii) Playing fields – there are playing fields under the management of Bulmershe College, Addington School and Reading University that are also available for public use.

Tranquillity – Within the general urbanised eastern edge of the Reading conurbation this green space offers a tranquil location for informal recreation by Woodley and Earley residents

Wildlife - Highwood is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and is entirely within the Bulmershe SULV area. A number of years ago the Bulmershe Allotment site, between Mays Lane and Bideford Close was reduced in size by Reading Borough Council. The land to the east of the site is now being actively managed by Reading Borough Council for both wildlife and amenity to allow the woodland on the edges of the site to develop, maintain a mix of scrub and grass needed by the existing fauna, keep the existing paths open and allow options for use as allotments and open space to be considered in the future.

Members of Earley Environmental Group report there are Common Lizards and Slow Worms in the heather adjacent to Highwood. Many of the more common birds nest in Highwood and maybe more notably, Sparrowhawks have nested in Highwood every year recently. Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatches have many nest sites in Highwood.

The area to the south of Highwood has been a good site for seeing Bramblings in the winter as well as other finches such as Bullfinches, Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Chaffinches. It is also home to many butterfly species such as Red Admiral, Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Peacock, Comma, Small Blue, Holly Blue, Large, Small and Green Veined White and Purple Hairstreak. This area is also notable for many wild flowers which also make it a good place for insects.

There is value from the openness of the land as retaining the physical and psychological benefits of having open land near to where people live and the protection of the setting and identity of the communities of Earley and Woodley, by maintaining the sense of "leaving Woodley" and "entering Earley".

As an interim measure, therefore, this statement has been produced to re-affirm the joint Town Councils' wish to ensure that there is no further erosion of the Bulmershe SULV. This will be achieved by:

- Jointly and vigorously opposing any planning applications which seek to build on any part of the SULV
- Call upon local Borough Councillors to ensure that such applications are listed
- Ensure that representative(s) of Woodley and Earley Town Council attend any Local Planning Authority Planning Committee Meetings at which such applications are to be discussed.
- Re-affirm to the Borough Council's Executive Member for Planning and the Local Planning Authority the joint Town Councils' opposition to any plans to encroach on the Bulmershe SULV
- Strive to achieve the re-constituting of the joint SULV Working Party as soon as possible.