

HEARING SESSION DAY 11 MATTER 12 -OPEN SPACE, SPORTS AND RECREATION

POLICY OSSR01 :- GREEN WEDGES

SITE SL02, Western Park Golf Course is designated as a Green Wedge.

The Leicester City Council's own Ecology Strategy Policy E2 states that "The City Council will define, and take appropriate steps to protect, a "green network" of green wedges, corridors ,and other vegetated area and features, so as to conserve an integrated system of wildlife habitats and will resist development on these sites. "

At the hearing on 3rd October council officers described Western Park Golf Course as being "private land" with no public right of access. They did concede that there are in fact public footpaths leading across the site. These footpaths are public rights of way. There have never been any signs to indicate that these are only permissive or that members of the public must not stray from them.

For 65 years the site was managed as a municipal golf course, being closed by the council in 2015 despite a determined attempt to save it. A municipal golf course is one that is owned and managed by a municipality, such as a town or city. It is open to the public and is run for the benefit of local citizens. Municipal courses are subject to the same rules and regulations as public parks.

Since the golf club closed public access has actually been improved. There are three gates allowing access from the Elmtree Avenue Estate in Glenfield, two access points incorporated into the new Glenfield Park Estate and a new footbridge from the new wildlife area next to the Optimus Point warehouses.

Western Park Golf Course is extremely important for nature conservation. Virtually all of the area is a designated Wildlife Site for the ponds, spinneys and rough grassland. It has been evaluated by the City Council as being of "High Ecological Value" with 85% of the woodland and 45% of the hedgerows being either Grade A* or A in the Leicester Habitat Survey. Sites of similar high ecological value occupy only 8.5% of the City's total surface.

The Council's Ecology Policy E1 states that "The City Council will take appropriate steps to safeguard sites of A* Grade and A Grade importance, identified as being appropriate for for protection on nature conservation grounds and will not normally permit development on, or close enough to adversely affect such sites.

The Governments 25 Year Environment Plan advises that locally designated "Local Wildlife Sites" are areas of substantive nature conservation value and make an important contribution to ecological networks and nature's recovery. They can provide wider benefits including public access, climate mitigation and help to tackle air pollution. National planning policy expects plans to identify and map these sites, and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss but also help

to enhance them and their connection to wider networks.

POLICY OSSR02:- OPEN SPACES

National Planning Policy Framework For Open Space And Recreation:-

Paragraph 102 "Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change."

Paragraph 103 "Existing open space should not be built on unless the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality."

Every grant of planning permission is subject to the condition that development may not begin until a biodiversity net gain plan has been approved. It was mentioned the mitigation for loss of biodiversity on this site, if it were to be developed, may have to be "off site." Where would this be considering all remaining open space is rapidly disappearing?

One solution could be to rewild the M1 - the extra volume of traffic that will result from all the proposed developments in this area will soon bring it to a complete standstill!

Sue Allison