

ADDRESS TO CEB ON DRAFT LOCAL PLAN FOR TUESDAY 16th OCTOBER, 2018

From Judith Harley.

Chair, Members of the CEB,

I wish to address you today about Agenda item 8, Draft Local Plan 2036, where you are advised to recommend that tomorrow's Full Council approves the Proposed Submission Document for public consultation, and approves all the supporting statutory documentation.

In July 2017 I addressed Full Council on the public consultation of the Draft Local Plan. I asked Councillors to listen to what local communities in Temple Cowley and further afield wanted – and needed – which is a swimming pool in Temple Cowley to serve the needs of the ever-increasing local population. Arguments about the new swimming pool in Blackbird Leys have been fully explored and exhausted; this does not serve our needs. We need a swimming pool, more leisure facilities, and more community spaces in Temple Cowley, and had hoped that the Oxford Local Plan 2036 would be a means of achieving this.

In July 2017 I asked the Council to support Temple Cowley residents in their proposal to re-designate the site of the Marsh Road City Council Depot, which we were told would be vacated within 5 years, for leisure – specifically for a new swimming pool and associated facilities – instead of its current designation for housing. We appreciate that there is a chronic housing shortage in Oxford but, as I have said at numerous Planning meetings, housing consideration should not override all other considerations. With increasing housing development all around us, including on the former Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre site, we need increasing leisure facilities in Temple Cowley. The Marsh Depot, conveniently sited next to Cowley Marsh Park, and on land originally belonging to Cowley Marsh Park, would be an ideal leisure site to complement the Park itself.

One of our local City Councillors, Councillor Saj Malik, told residents on the doorstep when campaigning for the 2016 local elections that he expected to see a new swimming pool on the Marsh Depot site within the next 10 years. Our previous Local MP, Andrew Smith, concurred with this sentiment on BBC radio, and told me in person that the Marsh Depot would make a good site for a swimming pool. Clearly, we have the backing of our local councillor and our former MP for this scheme.

During the public consultation for the Draft Local Plan I, and several other Temple Cowley residents submitted three specific requests, all to preserve and enhance our leisure and community facilities. These were:

1. Allocate the site of the City Council Depot in Marsh Road for community use and leisure, specifically to include a new swimming pool, to replace Temple Cowley Pools, when the Depot leaves.
2. Designate Cowley Marsh Park as a park, under policy SR5, to give proper protection.
3. Retain the William Morris Sports Field as a sports field, protected as open space by Policy SR2 as it is at present.

None of these have been included in the proposed documents before you. Last year's consultation leaflet stated: "We have listened to what local communities, businesses and other organisations told us and are now considering a range of options." From the current Draft Proposals before you it is clear that there is complete disregard for our local community's suggestions for the Local Plan. This makes a complete mockery of any consultation. I am disappointed, but not surprised by this.

The Local Plan 2036 is a significant policy document for the future, and it is future generations who will benefit most from our suggestions. Obesity in children has reached record levels and is rising; more local leisure facilities, as we have suggested, would combat this. This is a vital, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to provide integrated sports, leisure, and community facilities on the Cowley Marsh Park / Marsh Depot site, and an opportunity to encourage everyone to take healthy, sporting activity. The land on which the Depot stands was once part of the Park. It should be returned to the Park when the Depot leaves; once it is lost to housing it will never be regained.

Housing consideration should not override all other considerations. I am asking you to show some imaginative initiative and support local residents in their three proposals, above, for Local Plan 2036, especially in designating

the Marsh Road City Council Depot site for a new swimming pool and associated facilities, instead of its current designation for housing. Will you ask officers to make the necessary amendments to the proposed documents, and make the same recommendations to Full Council, before submitting them for further public consultation?

Thank you.