

Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds

Press Release

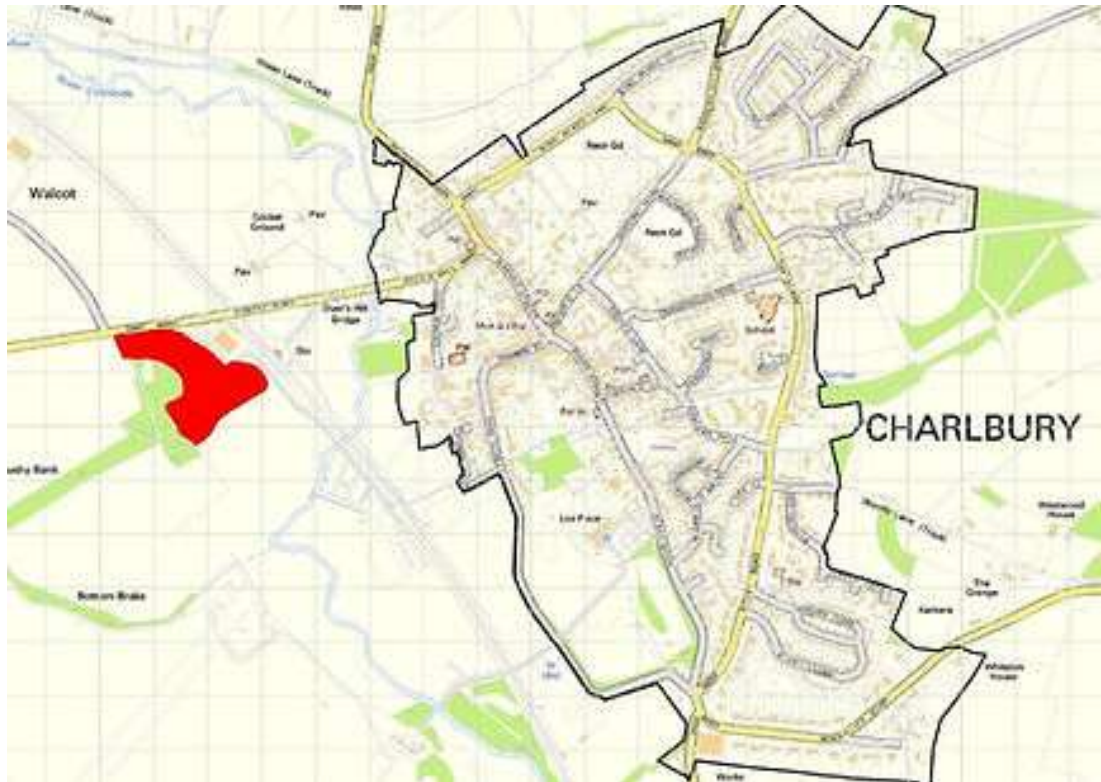
Date: 15 June 2026

Response to Daily Mail article

Having fought this extremely damaging development in the Cotswolds National Landscape for over ten years we are sorry that the reporter made no attempt to contact us for any comment before publishing his story.

We are also disappointed to see this being supported by our Banbury constituency MP with whom we have not had the opportunity to discuss it. We do not feel that Mr Woodcock has been apprised of all the facts on this housing estate. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the development with Mr Woodcock.

The article fails to have any regard for the development's location. Its description of the site as brownfield is a gross error. This is greenfield, described by the current planning officer as "an open grass paddock".



The site is on rising ground on the opposite side of the valley from the town, and in the protected open countryside of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The town itself is a protected Conservation Area. The site directly adjoins an ancient woodland priority habitat. The site is 400m from the edge of the town, across a river and its floodplain and

connected by a narrow 80cm footpath over a humpback railway bridge and without a local bus service.

This article makes no mention whatsoever of the site's location in the Cotswolds National Landscape. Protection of that landscape is overseen by a statutory body, the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, whose professional planning team has firmly objected to this development for over 10 years. The Board's team has repeatedly told West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) that this site is not a suitable edge of settlement site for development.

Mr Ian Cox, quoted in the article, was the first developer of this site. He obtained a consent for a young dementia supported living facility on the site which, as we had warned, proved unviable in such a remote location. Despite the original dementia home provider withdrawing in 2018, Mr Cox was still promoting a consent for the care facility in 2023.

The current application without the dementia facility was first considered by WODC in spring 2025. We were assured by WODC that the council would take a fresh look at the suitability of the site. However the May 2025 officer report failed to acknowledge the site's position beyond the town boundary in the open countryside. This was despite clear advice from the planning policy team and very clear statements about this in the town's Neighbourhood Plan. This completely undermined the policy assessment of the application.

The application also continues to propose a 5 metre buffer for the adjoining ancient woodland. This is despite guidance from Natural England and the Forestry Commission that a minimum 15 metre buffer must be provided. Understandably ancient woodland habitat is afforded extremely strong protection in the NPPF.

When the council consented the application on this basis in January our solicitors issued a pre-action letter. There were four grounds of challenge: the failure to acknowledge the open countryside location, to properly apply ancient woodland protections, to comply with its statutory duty to the National Landscape and to comply with its Public Sector Equality Duty in consenting the application. It was surprising when the Council conceded only on its PSED failure. However when the officer published his new report in April this year it was clear that WODC had in reality conceded it had made errors on all four grounds.

Today the application comes back to the Planning Committee with officers for the first time admitting that this site is not adjoining the town and is in the open countryside of the Cotswolds National Landscape. However despite acknowledging this breach of a fundamental Neighbourhood Plan requirement, the planning officer still bizarrely claims that the development complies with the Neighbourhood Plan and is recommending it. The Town Council also objects to the development due to its numerous breaches of Neighbourhood Plan policy.

Apart from a failure to grapple with the truth behind this development's location, the article makes several other inaccurate claims, including suggesting that GWR has proposed a multi-storey car park for the site. In its comment on the application GWR has ruled out all multi-storey plans at Charlbury station as unviable. Instead it has identified the low lying part of the Rushy Bank site as the only area that adjoins Charlbury station that could support a viable ground level expansion of parking capacity at Charlbury Station outside the flood plain. The parking crisis at the station and in the town centre will presumably only get worse.

This application is objected to by the Cotswolds National Landscape, the Town Council, the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and CPRE as well as ourselves. We make no apologies for seeking a lawful determination of this application.

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