

## Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds

Press Release

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### **Charity wins legal case against West Oxfordshire District Council High Court once again quashes development plans at Rushy Bank, Charlbury**

The High Court has today once again quashed planning permission on an area of open countryside known as Rushy Bank outside Charlbury in the Cotswolds National Landscape (previously called an AONB). This marks a third successful challenge by the charity Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds to plans to develop a housing estate on this site which also threatens a registered ancient woodland.

Mr Justice Morris KC ruled that WODC did not have the power to grant the most recent consent as the work commenced on the site was unlawful and the underlying consent had expired.

For 8 years the charity has been fighting the development due to its unsustainability and harm to ancient woodland, the protected landscape and the town's Conservation Area. The Cotswolds Landscape Board and hundreds of townspeople have lodged objections and the proposal has drawn criticism from WODC's own Conservation officers and the Woodland Trust.

WODC has been ordered to pay £35,000 of the charity's legal costs bringing the total costs paid out by WODC for granting and defending unlawful consents on this site to £95,000, on top of their own substantial legal costs.

James Whitehead, a spokesperson and trustee for the charity said "We believe that decisionmakers should be held to account for this unbelievable waste of public money which could have been spent on vital public services and developing projects that won't harm our most valuable natural assets."

"This is an unequivocal judgement from the High Court and we hope that WODC will finally now accept that development of this sensitive site can no longer be pushed through in the face of the harms to the Cotswolds National Landscape, Charlbury's Conservation Area and in particular the ancient woodland."

He added "The damage which has already been done to this woodland to make way for this housing estate means the woodland is now entitled to even greater protection. This field can no longer be lawfully developed and if further attempts are made, we stand ready to fight it again."

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Note to editors:

Just 2.5% of UK land is ancient woodland and it is a highly protected habitat under both local and national planning policy ([Woodland Trust](#)).