

Hanwell PC response to planning application by Armstrong Rigg Planning 23/03366/OUT

Application: Outline application for up to 117 dwellings, off Dukes Meadow Drive.

Applicant: Armstrong Rigg Planning

Hanwell PC OBJECTS STRONGLY to this application for the following reasons:

1. Main planning policy issues

1.1. The proposed site is not allocated for housing in adopted Cherwell Local Plan policies, which identify housing sites up to 2031, and is therefore **inappropriate** and contrary to the development plan. Approval of the development would seriously prejudice consideration of alternative sites and preparation of the current Cherwell Local Plan Review, as has already been demonstrated with earlier applications

1.2. The site was in fact assessed by CDC as clearly “not suitable” for development as recently as the 2018 HELAA. Site HELAA036 was described as:

“Greenfield site outside the built-up limits. The site is considered to be unsuitable for development as development in this location would be prominent on the landscape, particularly when viewed from the east, on one of the highest points in the vicinity. It would lead to the loss of greenfield land and informal recreation resource for local people which is in close proximity to the existing Hanwell Fields development.

With regard to assisting Oxford with its unmet housing need, Banbury lies outside Areas of Search A and B. “

We note that when application 21/03426/OUT (phase 1 as it is now called by the applicant) was approved the CDC response suggested that this was done so on the basis that it represented only a small portion of the assessed land. This further application negates that argument.

1.3 Policy ESD13 stipulates that applications will not be approved if they would cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside; and/ or cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography. The residents of Hanwell feel that this development would do both, despite the amendments made to the plan by the applicant

1.4 The proposed housing development would have seriously harmful impacts on the local area which adopted planning policies aim to prevent, namely:

a) A significant urban extension of Hanwell Fields and Banbury not in the adopted Local Plan (BSC2, ESD1).

b) Piecemeal housing development in the open countryside, outside the built-up area of Banbury (C8).

c) Loss of an important, prominent landscape feature that adds to the character and identity of the area of open countryside north of Dukes Meadow Drive (ESD13).

1.5 Development of this site would set a damaging precedent for further urban development north of Dukes Meadow Drive, adversely affecting the setting and character of the surrounding villages, notably Hanwell. This is further demonstrated by the previous approval of 21/03426/OUT. Adopted planning policies seek to protect the open countryside and important landscapes.

- 1.6 Development of this site would set a damaging precedent for greater coalescence of the Banbury urban area and Hanwell village, and the gradual loss of the important strategic “gap” between Banbury and Hanwell. Adopted planning policies seek specifically to resist such coalescence (C15).
- 1.7 The applicant has tried to argue that the site should be approved because Cherwell cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply as required by Government (Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF. **We understand that this is not the case and that the housing land supply currently stands in excess of 5 years thus negating the applicants argument.** Future housing provision should be identified in formal updates of housing supply through the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, when for example the balance between greenfield and previously used land, as well as sustainability issues, can be considered in a comprehensive fashion. We feel however that regardless of the current housing land supply figure this application is inappropriate.
- 1.8 The applicant asserts that, given housing supply shortfall, Local Plan policies do not preclude potential greenfield sites from coming forward which are “sustainable in all other respects.” We consider the proposed development is clearly not “sustainable in all other respects”. Although the site is close physically to the Hanwell Fields local centre, it is located on the opposite (north) side of Dukes Meadow Drive, has never been allocated for housing, and will have a number of adverse impacts on the local area.
- 1.9 Regarding the applicant’s assertions about sustainability, we contend that the site is not sustainable in a number of significant respects, and therefore contrary to planning polices, including:
- a) Loss of an important and prominent landscape feature (C13, ESD13).
 - b) Loss of important open vistas (C33, ESD13).
 - c) Loss of informal open space for residents of Hanwell Fields (BSC11)
 - d) Adverse impacts on the environment & biodiversity (ESD10).
 - e) Does not “enhance” the area (ESD10).
 - f) Adverse impacts on local road networks due to pressures on transport infrastructure and poor public transport (TR7, SLE4, ESD1, ESD15)
 - g) Lack of further community facilities to serve this development (R14, BSC12).
- 1.10 We consider the notional benefits of the proposal argued by the applicant are demonstrably outweighed by the harm associated with the development – both within the site and more significantly for the surrounding area of rural countryside.
- 1.11 After COP26, there must surely be much more emphasis on the overall sustainability of future development if we are to combat global warming etc and create truly sustainable places to live. This can only be achieved through a robust national and local planning framework, not through piecemeal development.
- 1.12 **We note that the approval granted to 21/03426/OUT specifically stated that ‘The development, WHEN LIMITED to the application site, would not result in coalescence of the settlements or any significant inter-visibility.’** This extension beyond the previously defined limits would clearly breach this stipulation and would cause significant inter-visibility as there is no natural buffer and the area is much more prominent on the landscape.

1.13 This land has also been assessed as Grade 2 and 3 of the Best Most Versatile arable land which is covered in the NPPF as desirable to protect, particularly in the current cost of living crisis. We believe a document is due for release imminently by the Government which will cover land hierarchy in greater detail.

1.14 We note the amendments made by the applicant to try and address concerns that were raised regarding their withdrawn application 22/03064/OUT such as reduced housing density and greater detail relating to drainage issues but unfortunately all our previously stated objections are valid despite this.

1.15 We also note that the land approved in application 21/03426/OUT, otherwise now referred to as Manor Oak Phase 1, was up for sale for a number of months. We therefore question the intentions of the applicant in applying for phase 2 and whether they intend to develop the land themselves or not.

1.16 Impacts upon the village of Hanwell would include but not be limited to:

- a) Increased traffic through the village – this is already a contentious issue due to the volume of traffic on a winding road with areas that are single-track
- b) Light pollution – this is a particular issue for the community observatory which, due its location on the southern edge of the village, would be unprotected from lighting at the proposed development.
- c) Further erosion of the green buffer which conveys Hanwell's integrity as a village and provides important recreational space to local residents.

1.16 As a proud village community we have mounted sustained and united opposition to further developments north of Dukes Meadow Drive. Over the years this area has absorbed thousands of new homes when there is quite simply not the local infrastructure either within Hanwell fields, or the town of Banbury to support such over-development. Hanwell village feels very strongly that enough is enough and that it is time for the planning committee to start taking seriously the concerns of the existing residents and prioritising these over arbitrary targets and fiscal incentives from developers. We appreciate the recommendation of the planning officers to refuse the applicant's previous application on this land (22/03064/OUT) and hope that good sense will continue to prevail in this matter.

Note: We have tried to refer to relevant adopted planning policies in the CLP 2011-31 and "saved" policies from the CLP 1996.

2. Conclusions

2.1. Hanwell PC objects strongly to the proposed development for the above reasons and the application should be refused.

2.2. Any future additional housing provision for the Banbury area must be assessed through the Cherwell Local Plan review process so that proper consideration can be given to all the key planning issues and all potential housing sites.

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