

Hello, my name is Catriona Reid. I stand before you today as a Hanwell resident for the last 10 years to the day and a parish councillor. I am also a GP partner in the local vicinity and I am a mum to 2 small boys whose childhood is enriched by growing up surrounded by the countryside and who revel in the farming year. Over the course of this appeal you will hear numerous arguments from both sides. Alongside my friends from the other ironstone villages of the north of Cherwell District we will do our best to impress upon you just how important this matter is to us. This is not just a field – this is the future of a community.

If your decision were to be based purely upon local feeling and local policy with the existing and emerging local plans, then that decision is clear and unanimous and this Vistry appeal should not be granted. We are aware that National policy must also be taken into consideration and within that critically the five-year housing land supply. The case we put forward to you today is simple. Regardless of the accepted five year housing land supply within Cherwell we hope to demonstrate that the significant harmful impact of this development far outweighs even a tilted balance. Within this argument, we will focus on the negative impacts on heritage assets, on the harm to the character and appearance of the area, on the conflict with the spatial strategy including importantly coalescence and on the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. I would also like to draw your attention to precedent to planning inspector decisions at previous appeals relating to Stratford Upon Avon and Tiddington, where two rejected developments had their appeals dismissed on the grounds of coalescence when the remaining gap between the two settlements would have been 170m – considerably more than the gap we are talking about here.

The five year housing land supply is a transient policy which may change with future government administrations. It does not in any way reflect the exponential development in and around Banbury in recent years. This massive expansion has not been supported by any improvements in infrastructure. The roads are in an appalling state and travel within Banbury is frequently disrupted by temporary works associated with new build estates. The local hospital is constantly under threat of losing departments. Acute surgery went in 2012. Consultant maternity followed in 2016. A&E and paediatrics continue to fight for survival. There is no access NHS dentist within Banbury or a 15 mile radius accepting new patients. Further development within Banbury and particularly the north where more than 1000 houses have been built in the last 10 years is quite simply unsustainable and the appellant has made no attempt to justify why they are not pursuing a more suitable, designated site.

Moreover at the recent local elections the people spoke. The Liberal Democrat's became the largest single party in Cherwell and for the first time have representation on the town council. They will be working to overturn the decision that Cherwell alone within Oxfordshire continues to accept a portion of Oxford's unmet housing need. It would be a travesty to make an irrevocable decision based upon a housing land supply figure that is likely to change dramatically in the next few months as this policy is advanced.

The settlement of Hanwell dates back to Saxon times. It is Home to the grade one listed Saint Peters Parish Church the grade 2 listed Hanwell castle and three grade 3 listed properties that are private residences. Saint Peters Church dates back to at least the 12th century and there is clear visibility between the church and parcel B of the proposed development. I appreciate that field will not be built upon but the fact that it will be artificially landscaped and its use changed from farming, will detract from its current designation as open countryside and its appearance.

The village of Hanwell has been a designated conservation area since 1985. the

conservation area extends down Gullicote lane and takes in the original footprint of the gardens of Park farm, which have now been extended. The conservation area reaches the far end of the grain store as accessed from Gullicote Lane and there is clear visibility with the whole of parcel a of land. Notably there is, a mere 12 meters separating the garden of Park farm within the village of Hanwell and parcel a of land. To claim this is not an example of coalescence would therefore be laughable.

The history of Hanwell revolves around agriculture. In the 1811 census 52 out of 56 families were employed in that pursuit. It is therefore of vital importance to the heritage of the village to retain the surrounding agricultural fields. And these aren't just any fields. These are grade 2 and 3a best most versatile fields. I can't stress their value better than that official classification does.

Work on Hanwell Castle began in the 15th century. It has familial links to Kathrine Parr the sixth wife of Henry the eighth. It has recently been the site of exciting excavations to reveal an Italian style sunken garden. The castle grounds are also home to a community observatory and those who use this facility have expressed significant concerns regarding light pollution from further encroaching development towards Hanwell.

The 2007 update to the Hanwell conservation area appraisal states "the pressure on the village from the urban extension of Banbury is a threat to the integrity and independence of Hanwell. It is important that the setting of the conservation area as well as the as that of the castle and the grade one listed church is protected, there are two major threats to the character and appearance of Hanwell. The first is erosion of open space and rural character by unsympathetic in full housing and urban additions ". Furthermore the conservation area appraisal states that "the land around the boundary to the north and south is important to the character of the village providing the setting for the conservation area and as such should be protected from any unsympathetic development". As part of the accepted plan it is stated that the council will "promote the retention of significant open spaces and field systems around the village and preserve the setting of the castle grounds of the conservation area." This development would be a direct contravention of these terms.

Correspondence between the Keep Hanwell village rural action group and the appellant with Historic England have yielded the following : such development would affect the appreciation and understanding for the rural origins of the village and the close connection it has with the landscape. It will also affect to some extent the understanding of the historic relationship of the buildings within the conservation area with the surrounding fields which they formed. Historic England setting guidance and the NPPF make clear the historic connection between places, the kinetic experience of approaching a place, and factors such as noise can often contribute to the setting of a listed asset. This development would bring the suburbs closer to the church and the castle, closing the gap to the south, and will be partly visible and appreciable (through noise, lighting) on nearby approach roads and paths to both of these highly graded assets the development is therefore likely to somewhat reduce the ability to appreciate the origins of these buildings which at present can still be appreciated. This would cause some harm, but at a lower level than that identified for Hanwell conservation area.

this damning appraisal from a national organisation further supports the assertion of the village regarding the irreparable harm that this development could do and acknowledges the significant harm to the conservation area.

Further supporting evidence is provided by the housing and economic land availability assessment 2018 which listed this site as not suitable for development due in part to impact on the Hanwell conservation area.

The impact upon the heritage of the village was carefully considered by the planning committee during their August 2023 unanimous refusal of the application. As quoted in the Council statement of case to the inspector “ the planning committee also determined that the proposed development was likely to erode the open arable landscape which provides clear separation between Banbury town and Hanwell Village and forms part of the surroundings within which the setting of Hanwell conservation area, Saint Peters church and Hanwell castle are experienced, to the detriment of and causing harm to the setting of these designated heritage assets, contrary to policy ESD 15 of the council 2015 local plan and government guidance contained within section 16 of the national planning policy framework. “ the evidence is irrefutable.

However this is about far more than policy. This is about a community united against an existential threat. I moved to Hanwell as a twenty five year old fiancé taking up a GP training post. I had a dream. A dream of living in a community where I knew all my neighbours. A dream of raising children who would eagerly chase the combine harvester through the fields each summer. For the last ten years I have been living this dream. Hanwell is a thriving community, the home of hanfest as well as regular village gatherings, including coming together for recent royal celebrations. I have been living the dream. Please do not turn that into a nightmare.

This is about democracy and it is clear at every level from individuals, to local policy, to elected representatives at every level including the local MP that this proposition is strongly opposed. I beg of you to consider the impact of this decision as if this hearing finds in favour of the appellant it would cause irreparable damage and destroy the heart and sole of a vibrant and thriving community. It would be detrimental to Hanwell, to Banbury and to other villages were such a damaging precedent to be set. Hanwell is a place that exudes character. It could no longer do this with an identikit estate slapped down in the only remaining gap that preserves the village identity. Current residents are fighting now for future generations, not just to preserve the beautiful countryside of Cherwell but to fight to keep farming economically viable and to ensure the country's food security into the future. This is a matter of the utmost importance that must surely supersede transient political policy. I hope we have demonstrated the vehemence of feeling and the justification behind this and if we appear to be NIMBY that is because we are and because this development really is in Hanwell's back yard. We are a category C village and we must be protected. please don't let the devastation of our village be your legacy.