

## Vistry green-field development application 23/00853/OUT

9.5.23

As residents of Hanwell village for nearly 40 years, my wife and I now write to object in the most emphatic possible terms to this outrageous application for highly intrusive green-field development in the open countryside to the north of Banbury, development which is flatly contrary to the revised local plan only very recently published by the local authority and superfluous to their required 5-year stock-in-hand of development sites for future housing. The general planning arguments against any such proposal in this area, which we take it to be axiomatic are very familiar to the planning committee themselves, are set out in a previous letter below which, for various reasons, was not sent to CDC at the time but is clearly very relevant now.

In addition to these more general planning arguments, there is a further consideration specific to this particular site, which also provides very pressing grounds for resisting any development there, grounds which Cherwell have already acknowledged to be a valid planning issue in assessing earlier development proposals in the locality: the intrusive and deleterious effect of nocturnal light-spill from any such new houses, street-lighting, etc, on the Hanwell Community Observatory and its public-outreach activities for the furtherance of scientific education in north Oxfordshire. This present proposed development would, quite simply, be catastrophic for the observatory and the future of its public activities.

The one direction from the HCO site in which the night sky is still reasonably dark and free from Banbury's light-pollution is the south-west; many interesting celestial objects which have long been standard fare for the public evenings at the Hanwell telescopes can now only be seen to any worthwhile effect, if at all, in that direction, the view south and especially south-east having become far too heavily polluted by Banbury's light-scatter in recent years (a situation hugely worse now than 25 years ago). Right into that one remaining pristine view, Vistry's proposal would plant a massive concentration of artificial lighting right in the foreground and on higher ground. The result would spell the permanent end of a vital part of the Hanwell Observatory's public-outreach work.

For all of these reasons, and for the prevention of the opening of the floodgates to unlimited green-field development in the Ironstone Downs area of high landscape value to the north of Banbury, we urge the local authority to dismiss this profoundly inappropriate and insensitive application.

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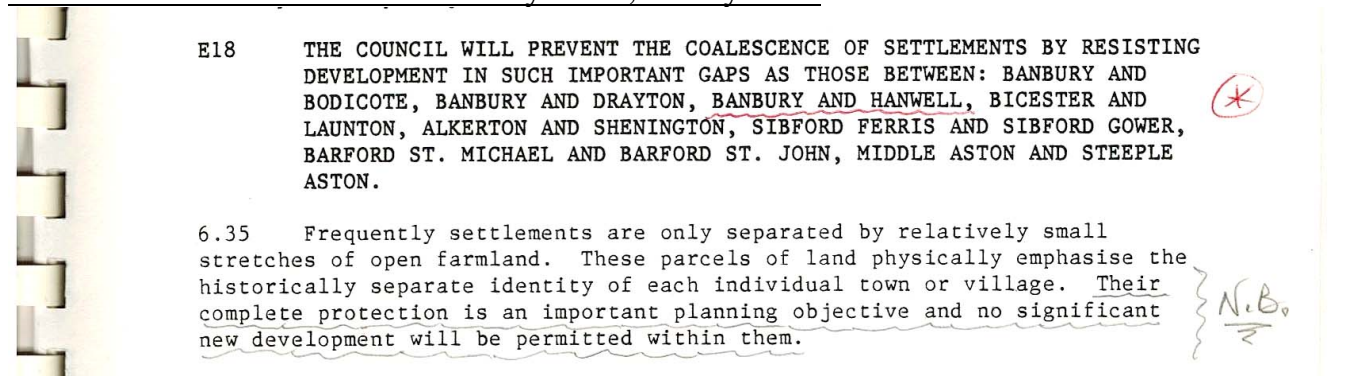
The current CDC Local Plan 2011-2031 review.

17.7.22

Dear members of the review panel and Cherwell planning officers,

I understand that the local authority is at present engaged in a review of the planning policies set out in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted in 2015, and am therefore anxious to reiterate my 100% support for one particular current policy which has governed local planning decisions at least since the 1980s: the absolute protection of the gaps between Banbury's urban fringe and neighbouring villages, in order to prevent the coalescence of settlements. My most immediate concern is, of course, the remaining gap between the northern edge of Banbury (north of Hanwell Fields) and Hanwell village, particularly in the face of the extreme development pressures that this area has been under in recent years. As those pressures appear relentless and set only, if anything, to increase in the future, I urge Cherwell in the very strongest possible terms to hold the line on this and – not least for the avoidance of doubt and misunderstanding in some quarters – to take this opportunity to reiterate and reinforce the policy, loud and clear, as repeatedly set out in the successive CDC planning documents listed below:

The Rural Areas Local Plan of May 1988, Policy E.18 stated



This statement clearly remains, and will remain, every bit as true, and the policy every bit as important, now as when it was published in 1988. The view it expresses was reiterated in Cherwell's

Banbury 2011 local plan review 1999, pages 6-7 thus

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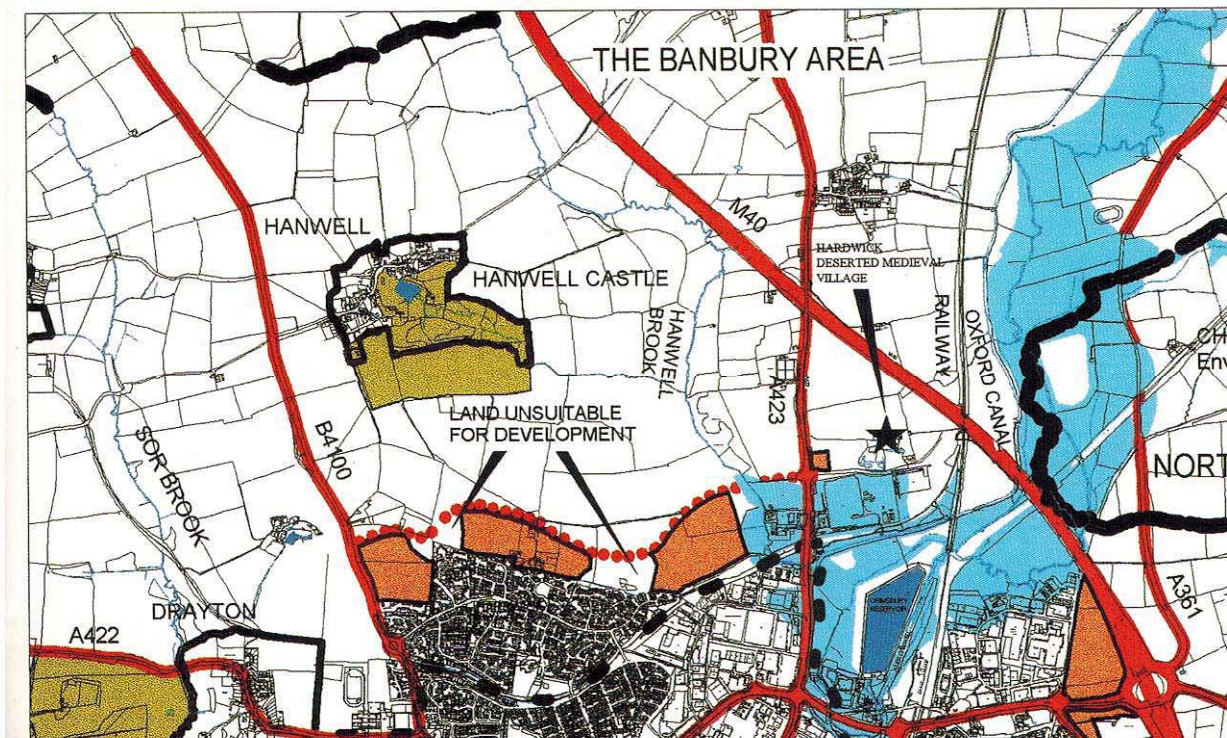
## Landscape and character of the surrounding area

- 2.8 Banbury originated on higher ground to the west of the River Cherwell. Modern development has expanded the town onto steeper valley slopes and the plateau areas to the north and south. This has brought it close to historic villages as well as many other features of wildlife, historic, recreational and aesthetic value (see Figure 2).
- 2.9 It is important that new development respects the setting of the town, minimises the impact on the countryside and maintains the separate identity of nearby villages. With the exception of some land between the town and the M40 which is mostly in flood plain, all of the land around Banbury is identified in the Cherwell Local Plan as an area of high landscape value.

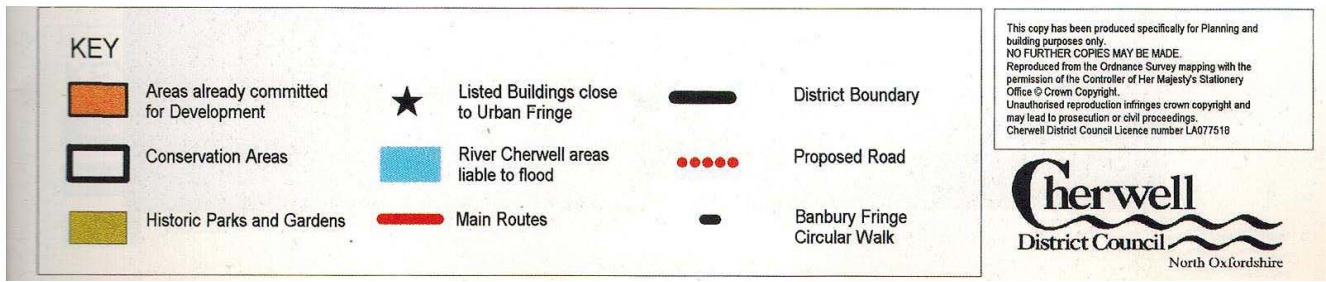
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More recently, this remains the position embodied in Cherwell Local Plan 2015, Policy ESD13,

which states “Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, [...]”

Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside [...]
- Harm the setting of settlements [...]

This was reiterated verbatim by the authority most recently in this April’s consideration of application 21/03426/OUT for 78 houses on the northern boundary of Hanwell Fields. That application was granted because it pertained to a relatively small area of infill in the indented boundary left by previous development on Banbury’s northern fringe and, it seems, was not felt to undermine the fundamental principle enshrined in ESD13. Despite that decision, sections 9.1, 9.20 and 9.21 of the April 2022 consent document make it perfectly clear that the maintenance of the open gap between Banbury and Hanwell is still an imperative of local planning policy in Cherwell’s view: ‘coalescence of settlements’ remains as unacceptable here as it was in 1988 (or earlier).

That determination to maintain the separate identity of Hanwell is further reinforced by policy ESD15 of the 2015 Local Plan, requiring the creation of ‘green buffer’ landscape - mitigation belts between the northern fringe of Banbury as extended by recent development and the open countryside beyond. Clearly, the permitting of further development in the crucial remaining gap between that fringe and Hanwell village would make complete nonsense of Cherwell’s own declared intention to “permanently establish a green buffer between the site [ ‘Banbury 5’ ] and Hanwell”.

In short, as the Council well knows, the absolute prevention of the coalescence of settlements, and in particular that of Banbury and Hanwell, has been a fundamental principle of local planning policy from at least the 1980s down to the present. Now must be the occasion for an emphatic restatement by Cherwell of that central principle as it applies to the remaining Banbury-Hanwell gap. This is crucial for the avoidance of misunderstanding among those outside interests intent on milking our North Oxfordshire countryside for their own personal profit regardless of the destructive effect of their actions on the local environment and on local residents’ quality of life. Those outside interests clearly believe that they only need to keep up the pressure by repeatedly lodging vexatious planning applications in order, sooner or later, to get their way: it is high time to put a stop to this once and for all.

Yours faithfully,  
Christopher Taylor.