



The countryside charity
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

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Cherwell District Council
Planning Department
Bodicote House
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11th May 2023

Dear Sir / Madam,

CPRE writes to object in the strongest terms to the proposed development of land to the east of the Warwick Road to the north of Banbury. The plans presented will not only destroy an area of Best and Most Valuable agricultural land (grade 2) at a time of heightened concern regarding the nation's food security, it will also cause significant harm to the habitats of a number of species, many of which are recognised to be in decline, some to the point of endangerment.

Further to that, the proposal has the effect of conjoining Banbury with the settlement of Hanwell, a Conservation Area with Grade 1 and 2 listed buildings. This is in contravention of Cherwell District Council's own policy against the coalescence of settlements and when considered alongside the potential of a large solar farm to the north of Hanwell, would see the village disappear as a distinct settlement.

In the Local Plan 2011-2031, at C.247 it is stated that:

"We will cherish, protect and enhance the appearance and character of our villages by protecting conservation areas and by promoting high standards of design for new development. We will protect and enhance the beauty and natural diversity of the countryside for the enjoyment of all."

CPRE fails to comprehend how this proposal might meet that objective.

The same document refers to land to the north of Hanwell Fields and indicates a separation to proposed further development, limited to some 400m from the village. This proposal would abut a farm property forming part of the village itself. Contrary to the thoughts within the Local Plan this development therefore would harm the appearance and character of the Conservation Area. At the time improvement to woodland to the north was proposed to *"help permanently establish a green buffer between the site*



and Hanwell". This has not been implemented and the proposal would see no buffer between Banbury and Hanwell at all.

The developer's own Landscape and Visual Assessment, at 7.141, acknowledges that the effect on the landscape character, including the relationship between Banbury and Hanwell, at both Year 1 and Year 15 will be **Significant**. This seems utterly contrary to the espoused policy of the CDC and should, in and of itself lead to a refusal.

In addition to these considerations is the failure to provide adequate infrastructure to support such developments. Rural communities suffer from a general lack of provision in this regard, from unsatisfactory provision of transport links (both private and public), medical facilities, utility services and schooling. Developers, such as Vistry, have little interest in these factors and routinely ignore them, as they have done in this case in respect of Thames Water's validly expressed concerns.

CPRE also has major concerns in regard to the assessment of the ecology of the site. Overall, the Environmental Dimension Partnership ("EDP") report seeks to minimise the harms which will be inflicted upon the ecology of the site, nevertheless the language deployed cannot hide the evidence of that harm and no mitigation is, in our opinion, capable of alleviating that harm.

EDP states that there is "*no reason, in ecological terms, why planning permission should be refused.*" CPRE completely rejects that assertion.

EDP's report assesses impact on a wide array of fauna from mammals to reptiles and bird life. All of the species mentioned are impacted and the conclusion often reached is that they will simply 'move next door'. Badgers, hedgehogs, bats and hares will simply be removed from the area by the process of building and destruction of habitat, acknowledged by EDP at 5.49 in its report in respect of reptiles and amphibians. This holds true for all species.

Furthermore, a wide array of birds will have suitable habitats for breeding destroyed or otherwise impinged upon. These bird species include Yellowhammers, Skylarks, Linnets and Greenfinches on the Endangered Red List and Dunnocks, Wrens, Whitethroats, Meadow Pippits, Bullfinches and Song Thrushes on the Amber List. As many of us know already, some of these species are already vanishingly rare and this speculative proposal seeks to further impact that predicament.

The NPPF states:

"180. when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;



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CPRE believes that there is potentially significant harm likely to be inflicted on wildlife and therefore this proposal should be refused.

To conclude, whether this be an issue of bio-diversity, infrastructure or the preservation of a distinct Conservation Area, this highly speculative proposal seeks to inflict significant harm upon an environment for no purpose other than the enrichment of its proposers. Cherwell's Land Bank has been recently properly calculated and there is no shortage of suitable land available; this land is not part of that and there is no exceptional circumstance to justify its inclusion.

CPRE wholeheartedly recommends that the proposal is refused permission to proceed.

Yours faithfully,

Robin Oliver
Chair, Cherwell District Committee