



Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

1 August 2023

Dear Yvonne,

I am writing with reference to planning application: **23/00853/OUT: Outline application for up to 170 dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated open space and vehicular access off Warwick Road, Banbury.**

The Vistry Group first announced plans to develop this site over a year ago. Since then, I have been contacted by a number of constituents who are extremely worried about the proposals. I have also visited Hanwell twice to meet residents and see the site of the proposed development for myself.

While I recognise that planning applications are the responsibility of the District Council, I share my constituents' concerns about the scale and setting of this development. Hanwell is a rural village, the vast majority of which is a designated conservation area. It has two listed buildings – St Peter's Church and Hanwell Castle – and the Hanwell Observatory is a much-loved community asset. The proposed site of this development would extend to the village boundary at Gullicott Lane, in close proximity to the conservation area.

A well-established hedgerow and treeline to the south of this site currently forms a natural break between Banbury and the land surrounding Hanwell. Residents had understood that they would retain this boundary between their village and the growing town. While land to the south was designated for development under the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1), this did not extend as far north as the site currently under consideration. Similarly, the draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 published earlier this year does not allocate any further land for development to the north of Banbury.

While Cherwell has long been one of the most successful housebuilding districts in the country, I have always felt that the growth of our towns must not be detrimental to surrounding communities. It is clear that the proposed site would extend far beyond the built-up limits of Banbury. Hanwell residents are very worried that this development would permanently alter the character and identity of their village, as its separation from Banbury would be lost.

The site under consideration is also currently Best and Most Versatile agricultural land – a classification reserved for our most productive farmland. Residents are concerned that this development would result in the loss of very good quality food-producing arable land. This is particularly relevant given the global food security crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, which has only emphasised the importance of a resilient domestic food supply.

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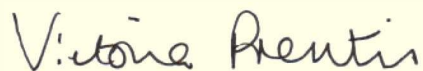
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Hanwell's status as a Category C village and the continued growth of Banbury have prompted further questions about the ability of local infrastructure and services to accommodate this development. I am aware that significant concerns have been raised by a number of statutory consultees to this end, including Oxfordshire Highways, Thames Water and our Integrated Care Board.

Local strength of feeling on this proposed development is clear: residents are gravely concerned by its scale and possible impact on the surrounding area. Almost 500 public objections have been registered as a result. Banbury Town Council and the Parish Councils of Drayton, Hanwell, Horley, Shotteswell and The Bourtons are united in their objection to this development.

I trust that my constituents' concerns will be at the forefront of considerations when this application goes to Committee next week.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Victoria Prentis".

Rt Hon Victoria Prentis KC MP