



HFDAG - Hanwell Fields Development Action Group

### **A plan without a plan**

HFDAG has been looking at the numbers, with a view to showing that Cherwell District Council (CDC) proposed sites for new housing at North Hanwell Fields and Southam Road are unnecessary. We consider that all of the plans by CDC are based on wrong numbers.

For years CDC has stuck with a top down number of 13400 houses to be built in Cherwell for the period 2006 - 2026, with 4800 of these to be built in Banbury. These numbers were given by central government under the Regional Spatial Strategy and the SE Plan. Both these policies have now been abolished by the coalition in the new Localism Act. As Steve Quartermain, the Chief Planner in the Government Communities and Local Government department, said in November 2010, "The Bill... will return decision-making powers in housing and planning to local authorities...".

This means you and me through our Parish, Town and District Councils.

No new numbers for building in Banbury have been proposed by either the Town or District Council who still use the revoked, top-down 4800 house number. New planning policy requires us to have a 5 year plan, and a 15 year "horizon" for housing needs. As we shall see this old 4800 figure, or 240 houses/year, is both pointless and wrong.

The number of houses actually built from 2006-2011 in Banbury was 1240, or a build rate and market supported purchase rate of 164 houses/year. This means in the next 5 years we could expect a maximum of only 820 houses have to be built to meet market demand - especially taking into account the current financial depression and its effect on the housing market.

Looking also at the numbers from the point of view of population growth, this is expected to rise in Cherwell as a whole from 137,400 to 150,600 in 2006-2016, or 1320/year. Banbury represents 31% of Cherwell so the expectation is that the population of Banbury will grow at 409/year; then assuming 2.4 people per house, this means we need 170 houses/year. About the same figure as the past house build rate would predict, and a total need of 854 houses in the next 5 years.

The latest CDC Local Plan May 2012, to be opened for public consultation on August 29th, has defined huge plans for more than 4142 house builds on six sites:

Bankside Phase 1, 1092 houses

Bankside 2, 400 houses

Canalside 1200 houses

Southam Road, 800 houses

West Bretch Hill, 400 houses

North Hanwell, 400 houses

West Warwick Road, 400, has been withdrawn from previous plans for unexplained reasons.

Sir Tony Baldry MP (Banbury Guardian 9 August 2012) asked for clarification from government, "...whether approved, yet undeveloped housing sites, do count towards the council's five-year housing supply"? The answer from Mr Greg Clark MP of the Government's department for Communities and Local Government was "yes", under the new National Planning Policy Framework, he said, "The policy is clear that unimplemented planning permissions count towards the five-year supply."

The current site of Bankside Phase 1 alone is therefore more than enough to meet the

housing need of 854 houses in the next 5 years.

So why are all these other sites defined in the new Local Plan 2012? It seems that CDC is bowing to pressure from developers or land bankers to name sites they claim are good for housing round Banbury, irrespective of whether these sites can contribute anything to our real housing need. And irrespective of the view of local communities.

HFDAG calls for all new sites be withdrawn from the Local Plan 2012 and the current plan amended before being put forward for community consultation.

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Press Contact [pr@hfdag.org.uk](mailto:pr@hfdag.org.uk)

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