



HFDAG - Hanwell Fields Development Action Group

Most important meeting in Banbury - Cherwell Local Plan 2012

HFDAG will hold a public meeting on the 6th of October, 15:00 at the Hanwell Fields Community Centre at which residents will have the chance to have their say and question Sir Tony Baldry MP, Cllr Tony Ilott and other councillors about the Cherwell District Council's Local Plan 2012.

Most residents of Hanwell fields are up in arms against the Plan in which two sites are named for future housing, North Hanwell Fields and Southam Road (known as BAN5 and BAN2), both of which have been previously rejected as suitable for housing expansion in Banbury.

Malcolm Finch, organiser of HFDAG, has summarised the objections of residents as,

"Our 5 Reasons

1. CDC have misled the public

1.1. Housing Figures are incorrectly calculated and not in line with government 5/15year planning.

1.2. All sites nominated have not been assessed equally at all levels, special treatment seems to have been given to the selection and evaluation of the sites.

1.3. Disconnection to previous plans, no continuity in approach to planning, with sites being proposed which have previously been dismissed. Incorrect information to try to justify their choice from CDC.

1.4. No Banbury Master Plan, included in the Plan are proposals for Banbury that are detailed and specific, but the underlying Banbury Master Plan has not been consulted with the community, nor issued.

1.5. Quality of documentation, Documentation is poorly written, no document management, and full of long winded "planning Speak"

1.6. Incoherent CDC website, documentation is difficult to find, there is no organisation between web pages or cross links.

2. The Northern Boundary

2.1. Previous Planning requirements, a significant reason for Hanwell Fields to be approved in the first place was Dukes Meadow Drive link road. This, it was specified would be a permanent limit to the Northern boundary of Banbury. (See our Press Release 102).

2.2. Potential loss of house values in Hanwell Fields. Occupiers had expected to always have green fields to the north. An Extract from the 1997 Design Brief for the development of Hanwell Fields says,

*"The land allocated for the development at Hanwell Fields is located on the northern extremity of Banbury and **will form the new urban edge** to this side of town. The objective is to create an urban form and new urban edge which appears organic in character, relating to land form and local colour and therefore specifically distinctive as Banbury."*

2.3. The right to open space, the previous plans, Draft Core Strategy 2010, Options for Growth Document 2008 and the Banbury and North Cherwell Site Allocations – Issues and Options 2006 all state that we have a right to open space. The proposed plans will take this away from the residents of Hanwell fields.

2.4. Estate adoption, over 10 years, Hanwell Fields is still not adopted by CDC, is it coincidental timing that the handover is now underway? As residents say, "Can we claim compensation for all the council tax we have paid and not got the service we are entitled to?"

3. No public consultation

3.1. Hanwell Fields Residents have no influence over our own area. Under the new localism act the coalition brought in it states,

"Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made". "Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan."

Neighbourhood planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like. These plans can be very simple and concise, or go into considerable detail where people want. Local communities will be able to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline

planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses, making it easier and quicker for development to go ahead.”

3.2. Developer led, it seems that CDC has lost its skilled and experienced planners and now largely employs the services of 3rd party consultants. These consultants are potentially influenced by developers. The developers are now calling the shots. The plan should come from CDC with the close involvement of the community.

3.3. Poor replies to Freedom of Information requests. In a recent request for the reason as to why the land West of Warwick Road had been removed from the plan without solid reason I was sent the following information,

“...regarding the removal of the land West of Warwick Road. This site was included in the Draft Core Strategy (2010) as a Reserve site. Reflecting the changes to government guidance and other changes within the Proposed Submission Local Plan, we are no longer proposing Reserve Sites within the Plan.”

If this is the case then North Hanwell (BAN5) should be removed, for the same reason, as it too was previously a reserve site.

3.4. Doubling the size of Hanwell Fields? There is no evidence on what effect the proposed increase in size will have on Hanwell Fields. Residents would like to know why this side of Banbury is earmarked for such large scale developments and why are they justified. (+150% increase on current estate).

4. Environmental Factors

4.1. Wildlife, no wildlife survey has been conducted and there are reports of protected species being present.

4.2. Excessive development on Green Belt land, CDC's pledges to protect the countryside. The CDC proposed sites, BAN5 and BAN2, are on green field sites on the fringe of the town, leading to destruction of agricultural land and urban sprawl.

4.3. Brown sites, in the Plan for Banbury CDC are currently proposing to use 25% of Brown Sites when Government targets are above 40%

4.4. Aesthetics, a prominent position, North Hanwell Fields (BAN5) is on rising land at the entry to Banbury from Warwick, building here would significantly imposes a new setting in the approach to Banbury, and would have a very high impact on the village of Hanwell.

Southam Road (BAN2) would present itself as a potential blot on the landscape. It is way outside town, and isolated. It is gentle rising land contributing greatly to the setting of Banbury as a market town and visible from many aspects across the town.

5. Lack of Planned Infrastructure

5.1. Education, the Plan states that for North Hanwell (BAN5) 100 primary school places and 80 secondary school places will be required, for a build of 400 homes. It assumes that these school Children will merge with current schools. Unfortunately CDC have not investigated this properly as the Hanwell Fields Community Primary School is already full to capacity.

With regard to Southam Road (BAN2), although a school has been listed in the requirements for this area, we believe that 1/3 of the site will not be developed (land to the east of Southam Road) leaving the development below the required threshold to build an additional school, putting impossible pressure on the current local schools.

5.2. Transport, if the total number of properties are developed on this area then we expect to see an additional 2000 cars on the Southam Road between the new developments and Tesco Island. Take in to account that Pro Drive are moving to Noral Way into a custom build factory, we estimate a further 400 cars used by employees and visitors, plus the increase in HGV's which is completely unacceptable.

5.3. Water, resources in Cherwell are low and demand for new houses will require provision from outside the catchment area.

5.4. Unemployment has increased in Cherwell, particularly in Banbury. The local plan indicates investment in Bicester and Kidlington but nothing about Banbury.

5.5. Age Discrimination, the population of Cherwell is getting older. The Plan does not address this."

Antony Watts of HFDAG has also studied the Plan and says,

"We need change and reform.

The question is will the Cherwell District Councils Local Plan 2012 get the job done?

The job of boosting employment, boosting investment, building houses, creating a better environment for living. Achieving richer outcomes for the community.

Sadly the answer is NO. And for this reason the Plan must be revoked and remade."

He has further criticised the construction of the Plan, saying,

"The document is 278 pages, a large part of which is "vision, strategy, objectives" which have little practical application to driving policy forward, and inhibit development through over-control.

*The overall construction of the Plan bunches together the vision on a limited range of subjects with specific location details which don't belong in the top level document, but at lower levels like the Banbury Master Plan, which has **not** been published. So, what is needed is a top-down document covering all key policies which will meet the rich and freedom outcomes we need.*

The focus must not be on growth but on value to the community."

As the government has said,

"New homes won't be imposed on communities. Local people will take control of the way their villages, towns and cities develop and have a bigger say in how their neighbourhood is designed."

Or, again, as David Cameron puts it, "*We're determined to cut through the bureaucracy that holds us back. That starts with getting the planners off our backs. Getting behind the businesses that have the ambition to expand, and meeting the aspirations of families that want to buy or improve a home.*"

The proposed Plan must be revoked, then remade to clearly specify how these needs of the community will be met. With CDC commitments, in fewer than 30 pages, covering,

** Basic vision and commitments to achieve plans*

** Housing need, including affordable, the overall numbers to build in 5 years, horizon opportunities for the next 15 years*

** Financial support to be provided for employers, builders and buyers*

** Infrastructure: schools, medical, old people care, transport, roads, telecom, community, culture, etc*

Such a Plan should be built in close cooperation with the community and be supported by the council with resources to *fulfil* it. The council must take charge of developers, make them respect and compete for council plans, not the other way round.

There will no doubt be a reaction to these many proposals for **Change and Reform**, but that is exactly what is called for by government and communities. The reported satisfaction for the planning function of the council is very low at just 30%.

Please see the web site www.hfdag.org.uk.

For more information please contact HFDAG Malcolm Finch 07713 401764/01295 278250, or Antony Watts 07969 421 886/01295 269 051.

20 Sept 2012