



## **Housing is moving in the wrong direction**

The news of the submission by Persimmon/Pegasus for planning permission at North Hanwell Fields comes as no surprise to HFDAG (Hanwell Fields Development Action Group).

It is a rather devious move on their behalf, one which we are guessing has been triggered by the positive public response to the Miller Homes plan on land to the West of Warwick road. A number of HFDAG members attended the recent exhibition by Miller Homes at the town hall. We were very impressed with the proposals and the professionalism of the staff, who were both knowledgeable and informative. The same could not be said about Pegasus, who also recently (in the last couple of months) have also put on an exhibition of their plans for development on land North of Hanwell Fields. In comparison their presentation was very poor, and not worthy to be called a 'consultation'. Just two panels showed their plans and two, rather useless, members of staff were present who couldn't tell you anything. This shows in the plans Persimmon have just submitted - the residents of Hanwell Fields were asked for input towards these plans, which was given, and this has blatantly been ignored. Quite frankly we do not want houses to the North of Hanwell Fields.

## **Misery and confusion**

As home owners on this estate most have been sold property on the basis that no further

development would take place north of Dukes Meadow Drive. This was part of the original Design Brief set out by Cherwell District Council in 1996-97 for the development of Hanwell Fields. The council are now trying to back away from this agreement, even though it was *their* original requirement, that ultimately was upheld in a contract with the developers at the time.

Cherwell council are wandering around like headless chickens, not really sure what to do next. We have no faith in the Local Plan 2012, which clearly lacks vision, intelligence, cohesion, or well, planning. We say this based on fact. Some examples:

Firstly, CDC are currently involved in dispute with a developer about proposed housing at Saltway to the South of Banbury. They are arguing that the current Saltway forms a boundary that should not be crossed... Hang on minute, we got one of those agreements 10 years ago. But are they fighting this? No they are actively encouraging breaking it. And have CDC fought this very Persimmon development in the past? Yes! At great expense to the residents of Cherwell, when CDC won an expensive legal case.

So they are supporting the building of more houses past the northern boundary but fighting them to the south. How's that fair? Given it was CDC who designated Dukes Meadow Drive as the northern boundary / perimeter road this is ludicrous.

Secondly, the land West of Warwick road has been removed from the Local Plan because it 'breaches the Western Boundary' and interferes with the Drayton conservation area. However if you look at the planned area for West Bretch Hill, not only is it further to the west, but has more of an impact on the Drayton Conservation area. Again no equal judgement.

HFDAG have looked at all areas around Banbury, as suggested by Tony Baldry, MP. He advised us to seek better alternatives to the developments of BAN5 and BAN2. When you look at Saltway it is actually a *much more* sustainable area than anything to the North of Banbury, but Saltway isn't on the plan!

### **Equal treatment**

What we would like to see is that all areas around Banbury, if not all of Cherwell, are

assessed on the same level of assessment with the same parameters. There is no valid reason as to why BAN5 (North Hanwell Fields) or BAN2 (Southam Road) is any better than West of Warwick road or Saltway, in fact there are very good reasons why they are a much worse choice.

### **What do Persimmon propose?**

The plans submitted by Persimmon suggest that a number of buildings will be 12m high, which when placed at BAN5 - one of the highest points in Banbury - will stand out like a sore thumb, dominating the view both north from the town and south from the village of Hanwell.

### **The main issues**

This goes completely against the wishes of the residents of Hanwell Fields, it goes against the wishes of Hanwell villagers, it goes against the criteria of the council, and yet they still submit it.

Stupidly the Persimmon plan suggests sports pitches....what more? We have 2 pitches a few hundred metres down the road, and flood lit pitches a few hundred metres down Warwick road. As we move forward with an ageing population we do not want more sports pitches. there are more than enough. We need outdoor and indoor pursuits for the more ageing.

There are two ancient public footpaths that run through the North Hanwell BAN5 open site which are both used extensively by walkers. Persimmon want to urbanise and landscape them. We don't want them to, they're a fine open space they way they are.

There are bigger issues such as traffic impact. Dukes Meadow Drive is already overused. It's a quiet residential link road not a motorway, which it is fast becoming. We already have excessive use by speeding drivers, including an increasing number of HGV's, using it as a cut through. When an incident happens on the M40 everyone uses it to get from Southam Road to Warwick Road. BAN5 will encourage car use.

CDC are currently trying to stop OCC from closing the only bus route we've got because of underuse. OK, it could be said that the more people you bring in the area the greater the

chance of it being used. However when you look at the location of BAN5 it is the furthest point away from employment, from the town centre and leisure facilities. I would go as far as to say that 99.9% of households on Hanwell Fields use a car to get about, and those from BAN5 will do the same. Parents even use their car to drive the kids to school in the middle of the estate from the top!!!

Education? Hanwell Fields Primary is full, regardless of what the report says. The top half of the estate is said to be outside their catchment area now, as they can't cope with demand. How will Persimmon fix this? No one knows, not even themselves.

### **And our Councillors - no democracy here**

Can we call on the support of our locally elected councillors? No.

Now here's a story.

The three councillors that represent Hardwick and Hanwell Fields are ALL on the Executive Board of the council, which means they cannot go against the councils own plans. So the councillors who are supposed to be representing the residents of this ward, *can't actually represent us*. Perhaps a change of councillors is what is needed? Not just for our ward but for the majority of those on the executive board, who mostly live outside Banbury anyway. They do not appear to have the views of the people of Banbury in mind.

For example, Hanwell Fields has been built for 10 years and it is still un-adopted. Do we have any faith in the council being able to manage more large build-up areas. Heck no. Incompetent is a word they know all too well.

### **Is there any demand for swathes of housing?**

We recently arranged a meeting with a number of Cherwell District councillors and Tony Baldry MP, and were told that Cherwell needed all these (up to 4500 in Banbury, see our Press Release 112 on the web site [www.hfdag.org.uk](http://www.hfdag.org.uk)) new houses because of huge demand. Persimmon are claiming the same thing. That their plans will help CDC fulfil the housing need.

HFDAG argument is quite simple....what demand? There are 3 main points to prove this, all of which CDC can't seem to grasp:

1 - We were told at the time of our recent meeting with councillors that over 4000 people were in desperate need of housing in Cherwell and yet a few weeks later council leader Barry Wood slashed the number by 2800.

2 - Bankside & Canalside. If there is such a high demand for housing as CDC and the developers say, then why has not ONE single brick been laid at either of these sites. Both sites have had permission for nearly 4 years.

3 - There are houses for sale in Banbury that have been for sale for over 12 months, there are on average 300-350 houses for sale every month in Banbury. Developments in Bloxham still have empty new build properties for sale and can't be shifted.

It is lack of finance, not lack of land that stops housing builds. A proper reassessment of planning around Banbury is mandatory. An assessment in line with the coalition's NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) calling for plans based on evidence of housing market demand.

### **But now... a question**

Is the main reason the council wants so many houses to be built because they get £10,000 per house built, plus additional fees for every social house built? The whole thing is a money making scheme, it's as simple as that. We are the idiots who will lose out.

HFDAG says not any more.

Hanwell Fields Development Action Group

[www.hfdag.org.uk](http://www.hfdag.org.uk)

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