



Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

End of Term Report – Christmas 2022



As we approach Christmas, I wanted to update you on my work as your Member of Parliament over the past few months in my latest End of Term Report.

2022 has been another eventful, tempestuous and challenging year, and we face some difficult times ahead of us.

Britain is still suffering from the aftershocks of a global pandemic, and Putin's war in Ukraine has compounded the Covid shock, disrupting supply chains and energy security the world over – conspiring to create the perfect global economic storm.

So, I know that we face some hard challenges moving into 2023. I was delighted to have been appointed as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in October, and I am already getting to grips with the many opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

I am always guided by the interests of our local community, and will always continue to uphold my first duty, serving the people of Hertsmere as your Member of Parliament.

I will be continuing my work defending our countryside, improving public transport, supporting the diverse local community and our vibrant local economy, and helping to secure investment for our local schools and GP surgeries.

As always, a report of this length cannot cover everything, so do visit my Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or website for further updates.



Defending Our Countryside and Our Environment

Since I was first elected in 2015, I have made protecting our local countryside and environment one of my major priorities for the area. As someone who was born in the area and grew up locally, I continue to find great pleasure in our beautiful surroundings. I know the vital importance of securing long-term protections for them.

Earlier this year, Hertsmere Borough Council made the decision not to proceed with its draft Local Plan in its original form, following an unprecedented number of objections from the public. I welcomed this decision as think it is right that councillors draw up a new plan which places the protection of green spaces at its heart.

I continue to be very concerned about the burden being put on our green open spaces by development pressure, and I have engaged with ministers on multiple occasions to urge a rethink of central Government's approach to Hertsmere, where it is hugely difficult to meet housing targets without damaging our beautiful surroundings.

Whilst I was on the backbenches, I made this case by tabling numerous questions to the government – you can find these here: <https://members.parliament.uk/member/4441/writtenquestions>.

I have been determined in my campaign to get the Housing Secretary to look again at its approach to Hertsmere. We have had real progress recently, with the Government's recent announcement on mandatory housebuilding targets. I feel constructive about this, as it will allow a more tailored approach in Hertsmere. While Hertsmere must do its bit to address the nationwide housing shortage, this must not be at the expense of what makes our area so special.

I know that many residents are troubled about applications that have been made for developments on sites which were previously included in the draft plan. While individual planning decisions are solely a matter for Hertsmere Borough Council and are not an area where I have any influence, I do not think it is appropriate for developments to be approved on sites which were included in the original draft plan, which was comprehensively rejected by local residents.



Oliver at the Bushey Country Club site

In particular, I know many residents have concerns about the future of the former Bushey Country Club. From the outset I have been clear that we must preserve the green open spaces of the golf club site. This is an integral part of the village, and I have done all I can to support the community in resisting its loss. This site is a part of Bushey community life and residents have a right to a say in it. After speaking to hundreds of you at the public meeting in 2018, I have met regularly with local councillors, and leader of Hertsmere Borough Council Morris Bright, to receive updates and relay concerns to me expressed by residents.

We can achieve the best of both worlds in ensuring the future of this site – if the Council gets it right, there can be enhanced access to what was previously closed to public access, we can link the green space to Merry Hill and provide much needed facilities on the previously developed land. I will continue to make the case for this and for the protection of a site that is integral to Bushey.

I will also continue to fight against this proposal to build a Rail Freight Terminal near Radlett. Since being elected I have consistently fought against this completely unnecessary proposal. I have always been clear that it will have a detrimental effect on our local area and adversely affect my constituents.

I was immensely disappointed in the decision taken by St Albans District Council to remove the Park Street Garden Village site from their local plan in favour of this rail freight terminal. I have consistently engaged with all agencies involved to fight this proposal and remain steadfastly against the decision to build this terminal.



I am alarmed that Hertfordshire County Council is proposing to approve the sale of the site, paving the way for this rail freight terminal. I will continue to fight against this on behalf of Hertsmere residents.

I always try to be a strong voice for residents in standing up for our green open spaces. This includes working with residents to fight the De-Registration and Exchange of village green land at Woodcock Hill in Borehamwood, working with all parties to secure the future of Aldenham Reservoir and taking a close interest in the application to develop a solar farm in Radlett. I have been clear my opposition to the application at Woodcock Hill Village Green and have publicly expressed my serious concerns about the size and scope of the proposed solar farm in Radlett.



I have also continued to meet with residents, local groups, students and societies to discuss their thoughts and concerns about our countryside and our environment. Local groups, such as the Elstree and Borehamwood Green Belt Society, work selflessly to preserve what we love about Hertsmere, and I will continue to engage closely with these groups.

Infrastructure

I was delighted that working alongside council leader Morris Bright, we were able to secure the future of BBC Elstree. I convened a meeting with Tim Davie, Director-General of the BBC, to urgently raise my concerns

about the potential sale of BBC Elstree. I have been clear that BBC Elstree forms a vital part of the UK Film and TV Industry, and any owners of the site need to maintain this use and invest in its future. It was crucial that the BBC understood their vital role in the local community, and engaged with residents about this site.

After strongly making the case to Tim Davie, and following a constructive conversation, I was pleased that the BBC have committed to ensuring the continued filming of EastEnders, as well as the long-term use of the site for production. I look forward to visiting BBC Elstree in the new year.

Like many residents, I have been long frustrated by the poor accessibility and lack of lifts at Radlett Station. I have once again nominated Radlett Station for Access for All funding, which will give Radlett Station the investment needed to install lifts and make the Station accessible. I continue to press this with Govia Thameslink, who I am in regular contact with, and expect to hear the outcome early next year.



On buses, I know that residents remain frustrated about the withdrawal of the 84 bus route in Potters Bar. I convened a meeting with Metroline, Sullivan Buses, Hertfordshire County Council and Transport for London to emphasise the importance of this route for Potters Bar residents. Whilst I welcomed the update that the council has approved a proposal from Sullivan Buses to run a service from Potters Bar to St Albans, via London Colney, I remain concerned about the impact on Potters Bar residents.



I have continued to lobby TfL to reconsider, and have written again to the involved transport providers, including Metroline, Uno Buses and Hertfordshire County Council to enquire about the extension of the PB1 route to extend to Barnet as well as rerouting the 614 bus route. I will continue to follow this closely, and push TfL for a solution for Potter Bar residents.

Numerous residents have been in touch with me to express their dismay that Hertfordshire County Council is proposing the introduction of double yellow lines along Church Lane, in Aldenham Village. For many in the area, I know that St John the Baptist Church is the

heartbeat of the local community and is not only used by residents for worship, but is a community hub in the heart of Aldenham.

The Traffic Regulation order, proposed initially for 6 months, could affect locals on a day-to-day basis, potentially inhibiting access for the elderly or vulnerable. I have engaged with Hertfordshire County Council to express my concern and have urged them to work with both the Church community and local residents to come to an amicable solution.

I continue to work closely with residents who contact me with their concerns about housing issues in Hertsmere. I convened a meeting with Anchor Housing in Parliament on behalf of residents at Meadowcroft, Bushey, and met with the residents at Halliday Close, Shenley, who are having issues with their management. I also met with residents who were affected by the large fire on Balmoral Drive, Borehamwood, to offer my support and assistance. I am always keen to ensure my constituents voices are heard, and eager to make representations on their behalf to ensure they are supported.



Our Community

This September, we all received the news with deep sadness that her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had passed away. The Queen was a remarkable woman, whom I had the enormous pleasure of meeting on more than one occasion. She had incredible grace, a sharp wit and – most importantly – an unwavering sense of duty. Like everyone else in Hertsmere, I had a deep affection and admiration for her.

I was proud to have been involved in the initial plans for the Platinum Jubilee earlier this year, and I am so glad she was able to witness this jubilant event. It was a great joy to take part in celebrations in Hertsmere, including the beacon lighting at Woodcock Hill in Borehamwood, opening Bushey Jubilee Acoustic Festival, the celebrations at Hartsbourne Country Club and celebrating the launch of Elstree Studios Platinum Stages.

I was also very privileged to represent Hertsmere as your Member of Parliament at many of the occasions to mark the Queen's passing and the accession of our new King, including tributes in the Commons, the proclamation and the address from King Charles. And above all else, the arrival of the Queen's coffin in Westminster for the lying in state. It was a beautiful and poignant moment to behold, and one that will always stay with me.



It is a real source of pride to me to represent one of the largest Jewish communities in the country. I was delighted to meet again with the Jewish Leadership Council in Parliament alongside their member the Community Security Trust, and the Antisemitism Policy Trust. I have worked closely with the JLC for many years, and I know that both CST and the Antisemitism Policy Trust do great work at local, regional and national levels to protect Jewish communities. I look forward to continuing our work together.

I was also delighted to welcome a delegation of Rebbetzins to Hertsmere. Many have travelled from across Europe, including Ukraine, to visit the United Kingdom and it was a privilege to meet with them in the community.

Hertsmere has a vibrant and growing local economy, which I remain determined to support. Our local businesses form an important part of our communities and high streets, and we are fortunate locally to have a fantastic range of thriving small businesses, and they form the backbone of our local economy.

I make regular visits to small businesses in Hertsmere and was delighted to promote Small Business Saturday this year on its tenth anniversary. It was a pleasure to be back at Battlers Green Farm in Radlett, enjoying the tea rooms and shopping village, as well as my continued visits to our local pubs, restaurants, cafes and high streets.



I have thoroughly enjoyed spending lots of time in the constituency meeting many of you out and about. I have hosted many local advice surgeries across the constituency, including with local councillors in Potters Bar and Bushey. I have visited care homes, including Goldwyn House and Villa Scalabrini. I have visited Citizens Advice Hertsmere, and caught up again with Sebby's Corner in Borehamwood to see all the work they are doing to support young families.

Another highlight includes welcoming the now Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to Bhaktivedanta Manor for Janmashtami, the Hindu Festival celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna.

And of course it is always a real pleasure to speak to students of all ages across the constituency during visits to a wide range of nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, community centres, faith schools and more. I have enjoyed visiting: Little Bicks Nursery, Tots and Scholars Nursery, The Purcell School, Elm Court Community Centre, Parkside Community Primary School, Meadow Wood School and Watford Boys, to name a few.



As always, I am here to help so do get in touch with me at oliver@oliverdowden.com.

Finally, I would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year.



Please find below a selection of photos of me out across Hertsmere...

