



Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

End of Term Report – Easter 2023

As we approach Easter, 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.

I have been 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 medical facilities.



As always, a report of this length cannot cover everything, so do visit my Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or website for further updates – or scan the QR code for my latest news.

Defending Our Countryside and Our Environment

As many of you know, I am extremely concerned about the burden being put on our **green open spaces** by development pressure. It is, of course, important amidst an acute nationwide housing shortage that we build more houses for the future. We must ensure that our children and grandchildren have the same opportunities to buy their own homes that previous generations have enjoyed.

However, this must not be at the expense of what makes our area so special. We are privileged to experience real natural beauty around our towns and villages, and we must not allow this to be lost to urban sprawl. Growing up locally, I understand how vital it is to protect this, and it remains one of my top priorities.

This is why I have been campaigning to get the **Housing Secretary** to look again at the approach to areas like Hertsmere. We are exceptional in that almost all the borough's undeveloped land is green belt. We have previously been constrained by heavy handed housing targets, which force inappropriate decisions on local councils without any consideration of our individual circumstances in Hertsmere.

I am pleased that these concerns have been recognised in the revised approach being taken by the **Housing Department**. Mandatory top-down targets that force councils to build houses regardless of the circumstances have been scrapped and replaced by advisory targets. Crucially for areas like ours, local authorities will not be expected to review the Green Belt to deliver housing. Greater emphasis will be placed on beauty and protecting the environment, getting appropriate infrastructure in place, and respecting local democracy, with brownfield land prioritised for development.



Oliver at Harts Farm, Bushey

I hope that these changes will afford the borough council greater flexibility as they develop the new local plan and prevent planning inspectors from challenging the plan to force excessive development on our community. Of course, the council will still have to make difficult trade offs to meet our housing needs. However, I believe this is an important step forward.

Meanwhile, I continue to make the case to protect the countryside that surrounds our towns and villages in Hertsmere for future generations. **As I have made clear, green belt land should not be built on unless there are special circumstances.**



*Oliver at Woodcock Hill Village Green,
Borehamwood*

I have visited and spoken out against numerous development proposals in Hertsmere, where residents have expressed their concern about development on greenbelt. This includes recently visiting the Horses Field BE6 site in Borehamwood, where Barratt Homes propose to build up to 220 homes, alongside Town Councillors Cllr Pat Strack, Cllr Sandra Parnell and Conservative councillor candidate Andrew Grady.

I joined members of the Little Bushey Community group and Bushey Park Ward Conservative councillors at the Harts Farm site in Bushey, where Redrow Homes have proposed 310 homes for development. Likewise, I visited Shenley Hill in Radlett, alongside Cllr Lucy Selby, to speak out against development at Shenley Hill. I know that Hertsmere Borough Council recommended refusal on both these applications, and the proposals are now in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate. I will continue to support residents in their fight against inappropriate developments. I also continue to urge all residents to engage with the council as they take the next steps in developing the local plan for our area, to make your views known.

I was incredibly disappointed to hear that a Judge has upheld the Planning Inspectorate's decision to approve the Deregistration and Exchange of village green land at Woodcock Hill in Borehamwood. I was opposed to this from the start, having visited the village green on numerous occasions and seen for myself its importance to our local community. I made clear my opposition throughout the process, writing to the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate to register my objections, as well as responding to the initial consultation. I know that the Woodcock Hill Village Green Committee fought tooth and nail against this, and I commend them for all their hard work. I will continue to work closely with them, and Hertsmere Borough Council, to do all we can to resist these plans.

I also continue my fight against the completely unnecessary proposal to build a Rail Freight terminal near Radlett. I have raised concerns about this project since its inception, and I am frustrated that Hertfordshire County Council have approved the sale of this site, paving the way for this rail freight terminal.

It will have a detrimental effect on our local area and adversely affect the people of Radlett, Shenley and beyond. It will clog our roads, blight our countryside and put further pressure on the Thameslink line. I want to reassure Hertsmere residents that I continue to fight against this and have yet again lobbied Hertfordshire County Council to urge them not to proceed with the sale.

Many residents know that I have been working with all parties to secure the future of Aldenham Reservoir, including campaigning to keep the footpath open. This includes writing to the Secretary of State to support Hertfordshire County Council's application to determine whether the footpath can be designated a legal right of way. I am delighted that the path has now been designated a definitive right of way, officially retaining public access for all and helping to secure the future of the Aldenham Reservoir.

Infrastructure

I am totally opposed to London Mayor Sadiq Khan's proposed expansion of **London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)** to the perimeters of Hertsmere. I completely agree with the numerous residents who have shared with me their deep frustration about these plans, and have been campaigning against it since these proposals were first announced.

It is unacceptable that Hertsmere residents, who do not live in London, should pay extra to travel towards London as a result of the Mayor's poor financial decisions. I have also spoken to many constituents who have explained that these extra charges will put additional financial strain on their families during what is already a difficult period. This is



Oliver at Watford General Hospital

particularly true of constituents who commute into London or drive to vital appointments at hospitals such as The Royal Free, which will fall within the expanded zone.

I continue to make my serious concerns clear to the Transport Secretary, as well as to both TfL and the Mayor of London. Indeed, I **met with the Transport Secretary** alongside local Conservative councillors and candidates, including Leader of the Council Morris Bright, to reinforce the concerns of Hertsmere residents. Let me reassure residents I will continue to fight against this extension of ULEZ to Hertsmere's borders.



Oliver at Sky Studios Elstree

Recently, I visited **Watford General Hospital** again to receive an update from **West Herts Hospital Trust** on the latest plans for redevelopment. I know how important this hospital is to our local community, it is used by many local residents including me – my son was born there. As our towns and villages grow, it is important that we have the right infrastructure to match. I have worked closely with WHHT since the outset on their plans for redevelopment and will continue to work closely with the Trust on this project to ensure the best outcomes for residents using the Hospital from Bushey, Radlett and beyond.

I also continue to make the case for further **GP Provision in Borehamwood**. As well as discussing this with WHHT, I have convened a meeting with the **Integrated Care Board** and the **GP lead for Hertsmere Locality** to discuss plans for the future healthcare provision in the area. This follows meeting with local GP surgeries to understand their position, as well as meeting with the Managing Director of Hertsmere Borough Council to make the case for a healthcare hub in Borehamwood. I will continue to follow this closely.

In Hertsmere, we truly are a hotbed for **film and TV production**, building on the area's strong heritage in the screen arts. It was a real pleasure to attend a time capsule event at **Sky Studios Elstree** which marked the near completion of the site, alongside local school children and councillors. Yet again, I saw the excellent progress made at this site. **Sky Studios Elstree** is a huge investment in our creative industries and is helping to fuel the economy, both locally and nationally. With 2,000 jobs created and £3 billion of investment over the first five years, this studio is a truly exciting opportunity for the local area.

It was also fantastic to be back at **BBC Elstree**, this time pulling pints at The Queen Vic in Albert Square, during filming of EastEnders! I recently secured commitments for this site's future, guaranteeing the long-term use of the site for production, and ensuring the continued filming of EastEnders. **BBC Elstree** forms a vital part of the UK and TV industry and plays a huge role in the local community, so it was great to see this first-hand during a tour of the site.

Fly-tipping and **littering** are a blight on our communities, pose a risk to public health and damage the environment. I am in constant contact with both Hertfordshire County Council Highways Team and Environmental Health at Hertsmere Borough Council to urgently raise residents' concerns about specific incidents of fly-tipping and press them to work quickly on the removal of waste. Nationally, the Government has made commitments to crack down on fly-tipping, including plans to save money for households disposing of DIY waste, alongside new grant funding for Local Authorities to clamp down on fly-tipping.

I met with **Radlett** shop owners, alongside Cllr Lucy Selby, who were suffering with a scourge of waste left at the back of their stores on Watling Street. Following my visit to the site, I urgently made representations on behalf of the shop owners, and I was delighted to see that it has now been cleared. I will continue my work with local authorities, landowners, and residents to tackle issues of littering and fly-tipping across Hertsmere.



Oliver at The Queen Vic, EastEnders!

Our Community

We are fast approaching the **Coronation of King Charles III**, turning a page in our history in just over a month's time. I am proud to be leading the plans for this celebration in my role as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the Cabinet Office. As we enter this new reign in our history, it is important that we pay a fitting tribute to our new sovereign. This is why the Government has announced that throughout the United Kingdom, public authorities will be able to apply for a free portrait of His Majesty the King.



Oliver at 'Chatter Tables', Borehamwood

As we unite in preparing for the splendour of The King's Coronation, these new portraits will serve as a visible reminder in buildings up and down the country of the nation's ultimate public servant. They will help us turn a page in our history together – and pay a fitting tribute to our new sovereign.



Oliver in Potters Bar

I know that many residents in Hertsmere, and across the UK, are looking forward to marking this new chapter in the long and proud history of our nation. I very much look forward to us all coming together to mark this defining and momentous occasion for our country.

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 visit Balance in Potters Bar, catch-up with shop owners including Jennylou Flowers, Noshers and Radlett Opticians in Radlett, visit Wyllotts Theatre in

Potters Bar and local businesses in Bushey including the café in King George Rec and the shops and restaurants in Bushey Heath, and many, many more.

I was also pleased to visit **Borehamwood Foodbank** again, who are marking their tenth anniversary. I met with the founder Kristan Payne BEM to congratulate her on receiving a British Empire Medal in King Charles' New Honours List. Borehamwood Foodbank continues to work with tireless enthusiasm to support the most vulnerable in Hertsmere.

Likewise in Borehamwood, I joined local residents at '**Chatter Tables**', a local project run in Borehamwood at St Michael's and All Angels Church. This project is delivered by resident-led charity Leecliffe Big Local, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and works with Clarion Housing to bring communities together. It was fantastic to meet them and see first-hand the huge difference this project is making to people's lives.



Oliver visiting Dame Alice Owen's School

Another highlight was returning to **Shenley Synagogue**, to meet with the 'elderly social group'. As you all know, I am proud to represent one of the largest Jewish communities in the country and hugely enjoy visiting synagogues across Hertsmere and meeting with many members of the community including at Mitzvah days, Friday night dinners, events, Menorah lightings and more.

And of course, I continue 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 held local advice surgeries across the constituency, including with local councillors, and taken up many causes on behalf of residents.

As we approach the warmer months, there is plenty to look forward to and I am excited to catch-up with many of you out and about in Hertsmere again. I am particularly looking forward to joining many of the events planned to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and look forward to other events such as opening Bushey Performing Arts Festival.

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

Finally, I hope that everyone can spend some time with their families over Easter and enjoy the sense of hope and renewal that this time of year brings.

Find below a selection of photos of me out and about in Hertsmere...

